

A portrait of Prince, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He has dark, wavy hair and a light beard. He is wearing a dark blue coat. A small black and white Chihuahua dog is sitting in his arms, looking towards the camera.

Rolling Stone

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FROM 'STAR WARS'
HERO TO 'X-MEN'
HEAVY

Oscar Isaac

**PRINCE'S
FINAL
DAYS**

**PLUS
A GUIDE
TO HIS
ESSENTIAL
MUSIC**

**R.I.P.
GOP**

1854-2016

By
MATT TAIBBI

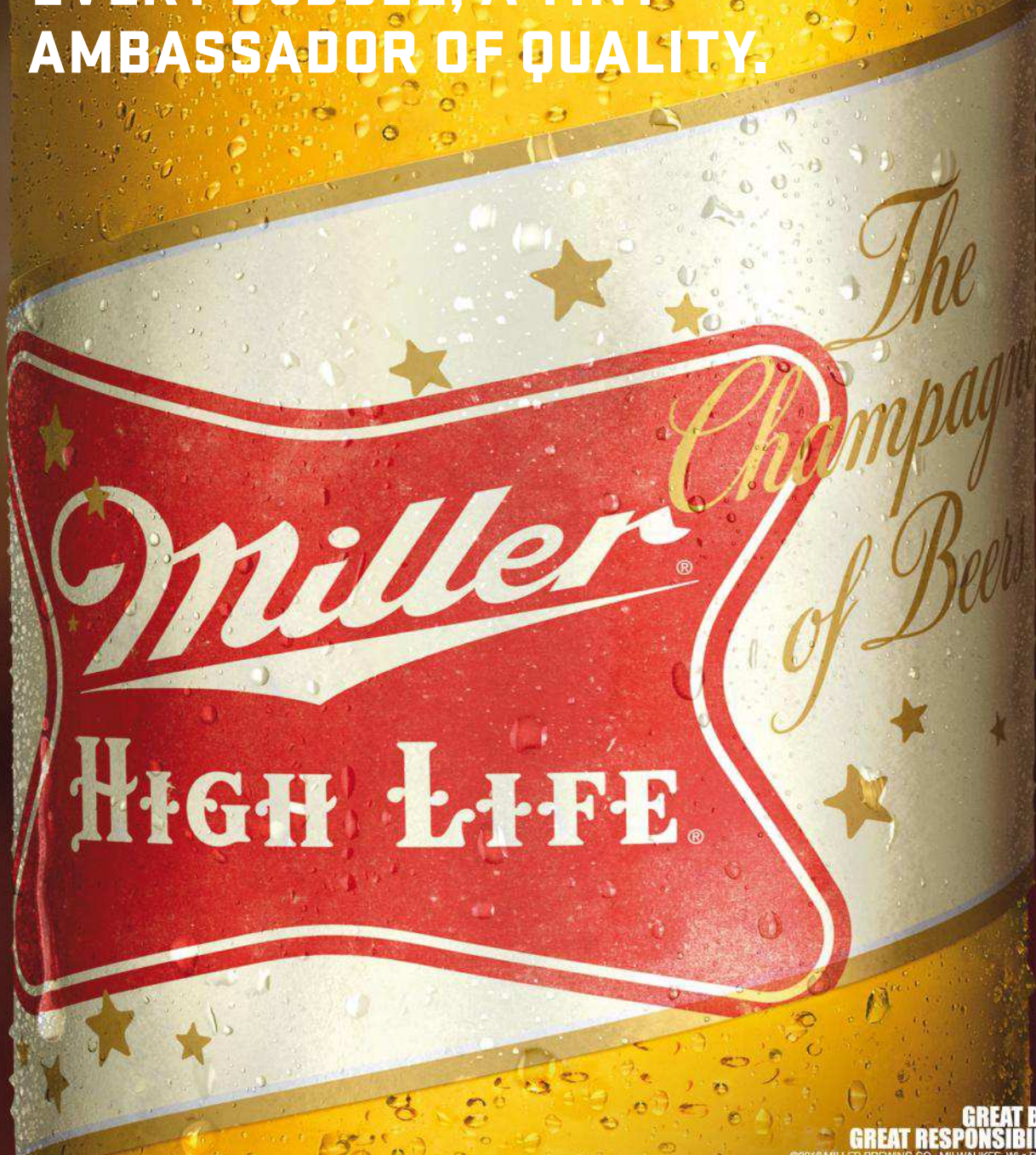
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RS 100

"All the
News
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THE NEXT WAVE

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ON THE COVER Oscar Isaac
photographed with his dog Moby in
New York, April 6th, 2016, by **Mark
Seliger**. Grooming by Losi at Martial
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The Last Days of Prince

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and his painful secret. 16

The Essential Prince

A guide to his best,
deepest and most
overlooked albums. 56

Pop life: Prince
onstage in 1986

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RS FILMS

THE END OF THE RAMONES

Twenty years ago this August, the Ramones played their final concert. In this animated short – the first in our new “Had to Be There” series – Marky Ramone narrates the legendary punk band’s last hours.



MUSIC

GLASPER TALKS MILES

Jazz keyboardist Robert Glasper discusses remixing Miles Davis on the tribute LP *Everything's Beautiful*: “People diminish Miles to the trumpet. He’s so much more than that.”



Q&A

WALKEN REMEMBERS

Christopher Walken, one of Hollywood’s great weirdos, looks back on his turning points, from *Annie Hall* to *SNL*’s “more cowbell” sketch and the recent film *The Family Fang*.



NEW

SEAN LENNON’S NEW SUPERDUO

Sean Lennon and Primus frontman-bassist Les Claypool take you inside their new psych-rock group, Claypool Lennon Delirium (whose album is out on June 3rd).

SURPRISE ALBUMS

Listen to Rolling Stone Music Now to hear about the newest surprise albums, from Drake to Beyoncé to Radiohead. Plus: We answer the question “Why do you like the music you like?” with Tom Vanderbilt, author of *You May Also Like*; and we respond to reader mail about Pearl Jam and Blink-182. The podcast goes live every Monday.

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Drake



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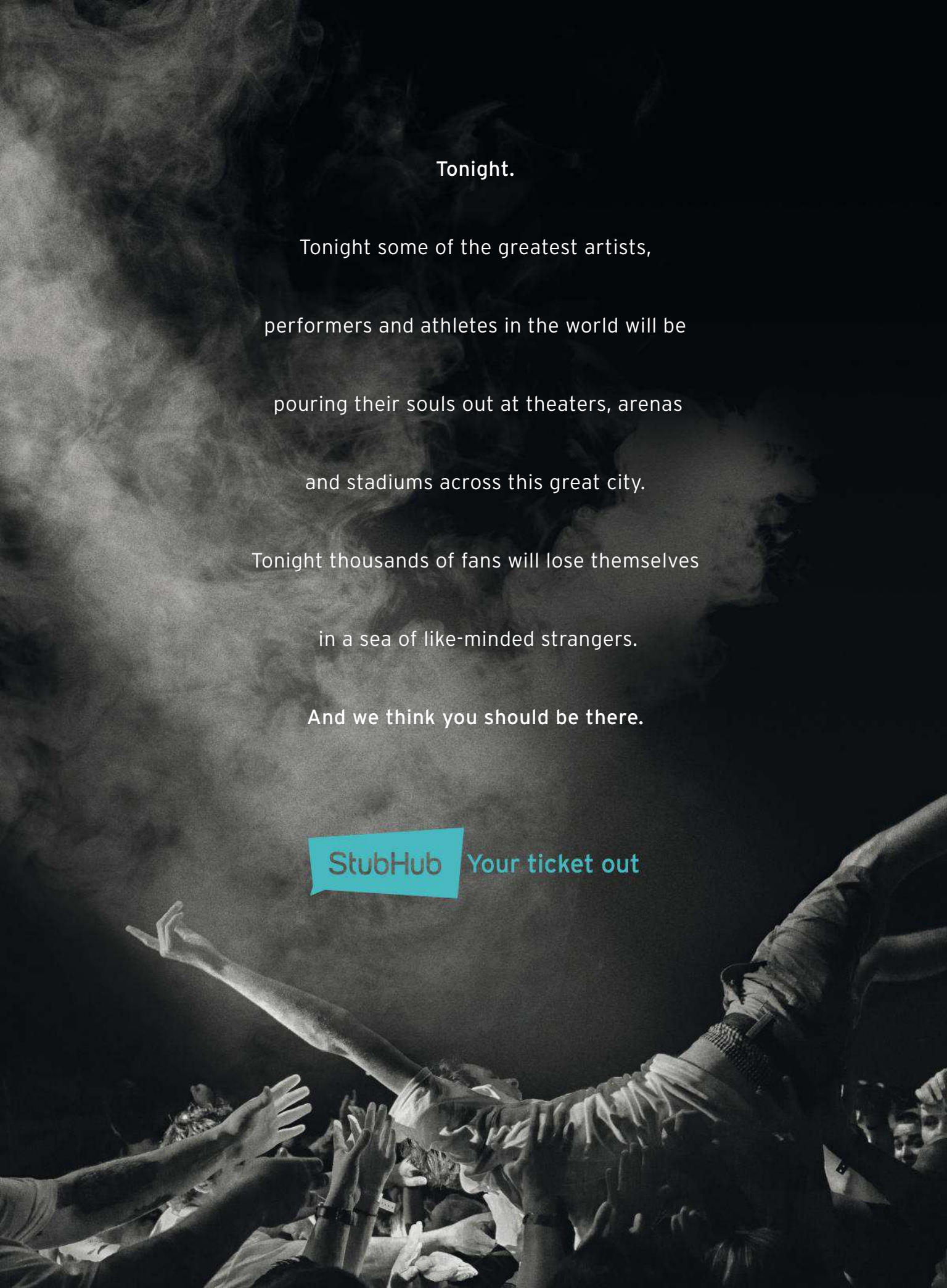
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Tonight.

Tonight some of the greatest artists,
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and stadiums across this great city.

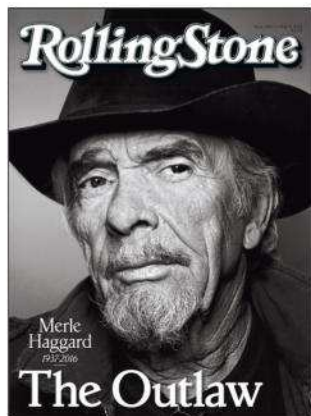
Tonight thousands of fans will lose themselves
in a sea of like-minded strangers.

And we think you should be there.

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The Rebel Poet

I JUST FINISHED MIKAL Gilmore's cover story about Merle Haggard ["The Outlaw," RS 1260]. I thought I knew a lot about Haggard, but Gilmore schooled me. I don't usually break down and cry after reading an article, but I did this time.

Tim Podoll
Rapid City, SD

GREAT REMEMBRANCE. AS A teenager, I never thought of listening to country & western until I heard the Rolling Stones' *Beggars Banquet*. I got curious, and the first country artist I checked out was Merle Haggard. His voice and poetry hooked me. Thank you, Mr. Haggard, for your gifts.

Dave Synwolt
Kalamazoo, MI

THANKS TO JASON FINE FOR his great Merle Haggard piece ["The Running Kind," RS 1260]. I followed Merle for 40 years. Great man, great life – ramble on, Merle!

Ryan Johnson, Santa Rosa, CA

MARTIN SCHOELLER'S COVER photo of Merle's weathered face was stunning. Every line, every gray hair, tells a story. Such beautiful photographs keep our legends, who are dying much too soon, alive in our hearts.

Jean Bystol, Rosemount, MN

Rock Hall Drama

When Steve Miller was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in April, the San Francisco legend launched into a tirade about the music industry and the Rock Hall itself. Miller fans and ROLLING STONE readers took note.

I'M ALL FOR THE FIRST Amendment, but how selfish to steal the spotlight from four other artists being honored for a lifetime of work to air your grievances to a hungry press corps. Love your music, Steve, but not your narcissism.

Susan Sharp
Via the Internet

IF MILLER HAD half a brain, he would have accepted his award and high-tailed it back home before the powers that be realized what they had done and taken it back.

John Mayo
West Hartford, CT

I DON'T GET IT – WAS Steve Miller unfamiliar with the debatable ways of the music industry before he got on a plane for New York? Not impressed.

Liz Nolan, via the Internet

I HAVE TO SAY I AGREE with everything Miller said. He might have chosen a more appropriate time to express them, but his gripes were absolutely legit.

Mo Russo, via the Internet



Miller sounds off at the Hall.

STEVE MILLER WAS RIGHT – the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame is nothing more than a bunch of old record-company executives getting together yearly to pat themselves on the backs and to tell one another how great they are.

R. Singer, Osaka, Japan

THAT WAS JUST A CLASSIC, very Keith-like remembrance from Keith Richards about Merle Haggard. I guess it takes somebody with his own rocky past to write with such humor and admiration about another one.

Harriet Worth, via the Internet

Reality TV

ROB SHEFFIELD IS RIGHT: *Veep*'s politics have been outsatirized by reality [Television, RS 1260]. Good as the show is, though, its cruel humor pales in comparison to that of the

GOP's bully-in-waiting. The world won't be laughing if he wins in November.

Tom Schneider, via the Internet

GOP Hitman

WOW, ROGER STONE'S CYNICISM about the political process is breathtaking ["Deep in Trumpland," RS 1260]. Though by no means a Trump supporter, I see why his fans are so angry – the system is rigged. But it's rigged by men like Stone, who are behind the curtains pulling the levers.

Ralph Cohen, via the Internet

MOST PEOPLE WOULDN'T break into the Watergate, not because they wouldn't find anything, but because burglary is illegal. Stone's answers throughout the ROLLING STONE interview suggest that little things like the law and morality don't burden him.

G. Wolf, via the Internet

The Conflagration

KYLE DICKMAN MIGHT NOT have intended to gloss over the impact a wildfire could have on Oyster Creek, the oldest operating nuclear power plant in the U.S., on the eastern edge of the Pine Barrens ["Apocalypse in the Garden State," RS 1260]. But what if huge flames hit the reactors? The 100,000 people in the Philadelphia suburbs and South Jersey possibly affected by a megafire might be a small percentage of the millions in the Northeast impacted by our own Fukushima.

Susan Paul, Princeton, NJ

Fire and Pain

JAMES TAYLOR SIGNED AWAY the publishing on four of his albums ["Last Word," RS 1260]? No wonder Prince was such a fanatic about his catalog.

Nancy Altman, via the Internet

Radical Lauper

DESPITE GREAT FAME, CYNDI Lauper feels she missed the opportunity to experiment musically [Q&A, RS 1260]. How nice that at the age of 62, she's finally getting to.

Al Sherman, via the Internet

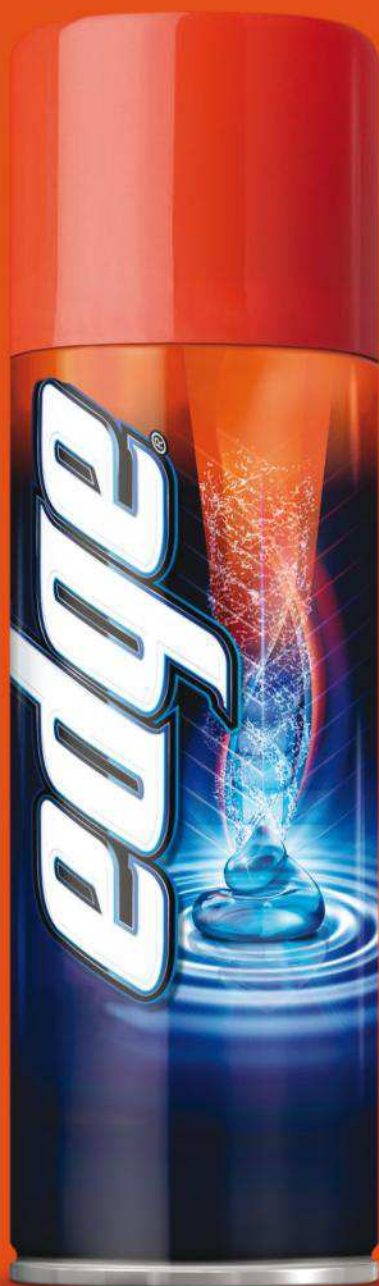
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The Playlist

OUR FAVORITE SONGS, ALBUMS AND VIDEOS RIGHT NOW



1. Radiohead "Desert Island Disk"

The five-year wait for Radiohead's *A Moon Shaped Pool* was more than worth it, and this somber Nick Drake-style acoustic bliss-out might be its haunting high point: "The wind rushing around my open heart," Thom Yorke sings, "totally alive!" You said it, man.

4. Dixie Chicks "Daddy Lessons"

Beyoncé's gun-toting country jam, "Daddy Lessons," was one of the finest surprises on *Lemonade*. Just a few days after the record came out, the Dixie Chicks knocked out a killer bluegrass version of the song at a show in England. Bey should return the favor and take an R&B shot at "Goodbye Earl."



5. Case/Lang/Viers "Best Kept Secret"

Neko Case, k.d. lang and Laura Viers get together for a perfect countrypolitan jangle-pop ode to an unnamed sensitive guy who is the "best-kept secret in Silver Lake." He must be to get a song this great.

2. James Blake "I Need a Forest Fire"

A highlight from down-tempo soulman Blake's new album, *The Colour in Anything*: He teams up with Bon Iver's Justin Vernon for a slow-burn ballad custom-made to soundtrack depressive booty calls.

3. Joey Purp "Photobooth"

Chicago rapper gets unconsciously fired up over a beat that sounds like James Brown and the Famous Flames playing a party barge along the River Styx.

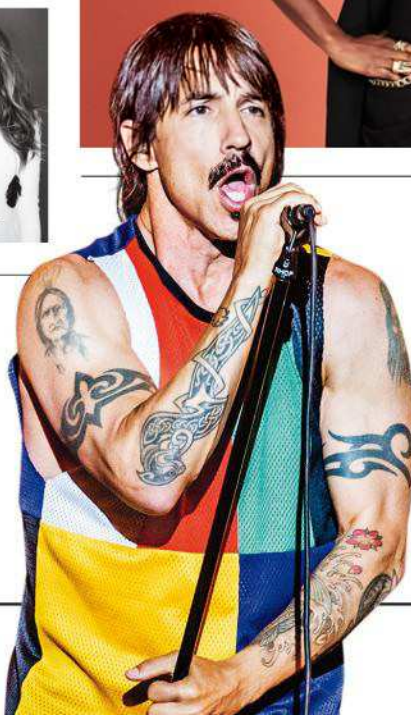
6. Laura Mvula "Phenomenal Woman"

Adventurous U.K. soulstress Mvula exudes pure joy on this summer-splash track, a tribute to Maya Angelou with a giddy electro-funk groove. The video is so radiantly colorful, you might need to turn your brightness down when you watch it.



7. Red Hot Chili Peppers "Dark Necessities"

The first thing we've heard from the Chili Peppers' new album, *The Getaway*, is a pretty dreamy beast, coating the band's bed-rock funk attack in guitar shimmer, poignant pianos and strings. It lands somewhere between U2 and *Superfly* soul – definitely a good look for them.



MY LIST



Lenny Kravitz

My Five Favorite PRINCE Songs

From the very first time he heard Prince, as a high schooler in 1979, Lenny Kravitz was a huge fan. "Then he became a mentor," he says. "When he left, a part of me went too."

"Head"

Prince was hardly on the radio when this came out, but this song was a big hit on the street and at dance parties. The bass line was just so funky.

"Controversy"

This took everything to the next level. It sounded so funky and mysterious and scary. It was a monumental track for me.

"Lady Cab Driver"

I love the minimalist quality of this. There's a drum machine going with an overdub of live drums, and real simple synths. It's so funky.

"Mountains"

It's a beautiful feeling that this song gives me. Wendy and Lisa on it – it was such a strong period when they worked together.

"Pop Life"

There's funky bass, slamming drums, and the melody is just incredible. This was his sound. He owned the big drum machine. Nobody else could do it.



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Rock & Roll



Rulers of the Road

Beyoncé runs the world, Axl does double duty, and much more

Beyoncé

Through October 2nd

TICKETS \$45-\$355

Beyoncé got a little emotional on the way to Miami's Marlins Park before the start of her first-ever solo stadium tour on April 27th. "I've dreamed of this my whole life," she said. Her Formation Tour is her most impressive yet: a politically charged spectacle built around her stunning new LP, *Lemonade*, and featuring darker versions of familiar hits, as well as a 50-foot-tall tower of video screens that shoots flames and projects psychedelic images. The 40-plus-date tour has already grossed more than \$200 million. "It's a home run," says the tour's promoter, Arthur Fogel. "It could be the most successful tour of the year."

STADIUM-READY
Onstage in Atlanta in May

Brian Wilson

June 12th-October 15th
TICKETS \$14-\$250

Not long ago, Wilson, 73, was considering retirement. Not anymore: After the success of his 2015 biopic, *Love & Mercy*, Wilson decided to hit the road to celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Pet Sounds* by performing the 1966 classic in its entirety. "I'm really having a lot of fun," he says. Wilson has seen lots of younger faces in the audience, and he's finding new meaning in classics like "Wouldn't It Be Nice" and "God Only Knows," with a band that includes longtime Beach Boys guitarist Al Jardine. "It's a nostalgic feeling," Wilson says of performing the material. "I go back to when I was 23 years old, producing that album. It makes me proud." Now, he's even thinking about his next tour: "I'd love to do *Summer Days (and Summer Nights!!)* in its entirety. Those are some great songs!"

Paul Simon

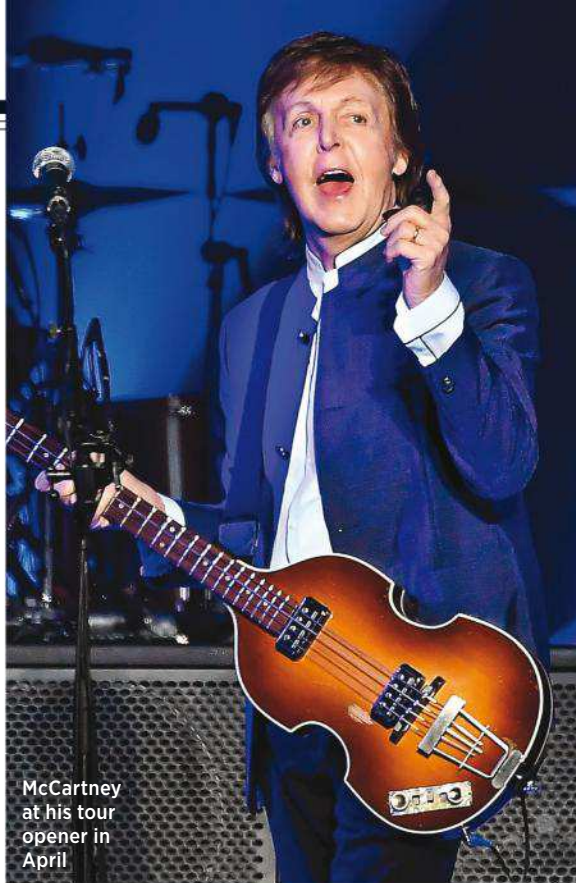
Through July 1st
TICKETS \$35-\$180

Five decades into his career, Simon hasn't stopped obsessing over his live sound. "I'm constantly [telling my band], 'Too many notes,'" says Simon. "Everybody doesn't have to play all the time, even though they're all very good musicians." Simon is slowly working in new songs, like the haunting "The Werewolf," but there's no shortage of hits. A recent show at Atlanta's Fox Theatre spanned from Simon and Garfunkel classics ("Homeward Bound," "America") to a heavy dose of *Graceland*. "They want to hear 'You Can Call Me Al,' so I play it," he says. "It's not like I would pick it out because I really want to."

Adele

July 5th-November 9th
TICKETS \$35-\$150

"I've been dying to do a fucking show," Adele said at a warm-up



McCartney
at his tour
opener in
April

PAUL MCCARTNEY

THROUGH OCTOBER 5TH

Tickets \$20-\$275

A few years ago, McCartney decided to spend more time at home with his daughter. He stopped mounting long world tours, in favor of shorter, more frequent runs. "It's like Bob Dylan's Never Ending Tour," says McCartney. "It's great, because it leaves you hungry to get back onstage." A recent marathon 38-song gig in Fresno, California, featured surprises like "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!" (which he'd previously sworn off as too difficult to play) and the first live versions of "Love Me Do" and "A Hard Day's Night" in more than 50 years. "The opening chord is iconic," he says of "A Hard Day's Night." "I suggested that to the band, and we all got a bit sort of goosebumpy. If it excites us, it will probably excite an audience, fingers crossed!"

THE SUMMER OF AXL

GUNS N' ROSES: JUNE 23RD-AUGUST 22ND
AC/DC: THROUGH JUNE 12TH

Tickets \$40-\$285



Whole lotta Rose: Welcome back, Axl!

"Nice to meet you!" Axl Rose told 50,000 AC/DC fans in Lisbon during his first show singing with the band. And it does feel like we're meeting a new guy. After years of reclusive behavior, Axl is fronting not one but two of the biggest tours of the summer: AC/DC (while singer Brian Johnson is out of commission) and, later, a reunited Guns N' Roses. "I'm hoping to make it through the first show before I get fired," Rose joked. He did, adding new menace to hits like "Back in Black." Here's hoping the punishing schedule won't cause him to blow out his voice ahead of GN'R's stadium run.

gig last year. She toured only briefly behind her 2011 album, *21*, due to vocal issues. Five years later, she's embarking on her first American arena tour ever. These concerts will showcase her powerhouse vocals and living-room intimacy; she often banters with fans, and recently barked at security for kicking some audience members out of the aisles. All 54 North American dates sold out in seconds, and while Adele could easily add more, she's pacing herself. "I'm not doing fucking dance routines like Beyoncé," she says. "But performing every night is still grueling, so I need to be in good form for that."

Blink-182

June 21st-October 1st
TICKETS \$20-\$99

The pop-punk pioneers have a lot to prove on their first tour since splitting with co-founder Tom DeLonge, who is replaced by singer-guitarist Matt Skiba of Alkaline Trio. "With the previous incarnation of Blink, there were times we wouldn't rehearse before a tour," says singer-bassist Mark Hoppus. "We really want to be ready when we step out onstage." Says Skiba, "[We] fit together like Legos."

Gwen Stefani

July 12th-October 15th
TICKETS \$23-\$180

Stefani knows she's out of practice. "My stomach is nervous," she says, looking ahead to her first major solo tour in a decade. "I haven't toured in so long." After a break in which she had three kids and became a coach on *The Voice*, the singer is excited to return with a new band. She'll play her old solo hits and debut songs from her confessional new album, which addresses the breakup of her marriage to Gavin Rossdale. "Even singing these songs is going to be healing," she says. "Because a lot of the music is so joyful and full of hope. It's pretty magical, I have to say."

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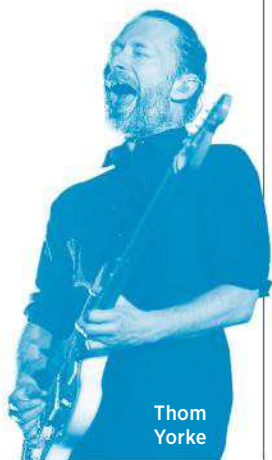
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INSIDE THE FESTIVALS

Who's playing the most fests? Who's battling over turf? And where will the hippies be? Five stories to watch this summer

TOUGHEST GET: RADIOHEAD, KANYE

Last year, Radiohead's people called the promoters of Lollapalooza with good news: They were finally ready. In an extremely com-



Thom Yorke

petitive environment where many major lineups are virtually identical, the band's presence turned Lollapalooza 2016 into a must-see. Kanye West worked similar magic with Governors Ball in New York, which scored "Ye's only summer show: 'He had a great experience when he headlined in 2013, and we had a great relationship,'" says organizer Jordan Wolowitz.

THE BATTLE FOR NEW YORK CITY

Governors Ball has established itself as New York City's biggest festival. So organizers weren't happy when news

surfaced that another promoter, Goldenvoice, was planning a festival called Panorama at the same Randall's Island location.



West

Governors Ball planners petitioned Mayor Bill de Blasio to reject Panorama's permit, calling the

company "aggressive" and "greedy." The city didn't listen, which means competition between June's Gov Ball (Kanye, the Strokes, the Killers) and July's Panorama (Kendrick Lamar, Arcade Fire, Sia) will be stiff. So far, it looks like there's room for both. "Our ticket sales are better than ever," says Gov Ball's Wolowitz.



Lamar



Haim

FESTIVAL MVPs: HAIM

If you're going to a festival this summer, chances are you'll see Haim. The sisters will play 16 fests, from Bonnaroo to Cincinnati's Bunbury. "Festivals are like musicians' summer camp," says Danielle Haim. "It's fun meeting your idols. At our first Glastonbury, we went onstage with Primal Scream, which was insane."

HOT FESTIVAL ITEM: THE FUJI

Expect to see lots of festivalgoers with the Fujifilm Instax Mini, a tiny Polaroid-style camera that produces instant prints. "It basically gives me a yearbook," says fest attendee Jeff Weller.



JAMIS STILL KING

Jam-band fests may not make headlines, but they're some of the industry's most reliable events – and they're growing. New York's Mountain Jam boasts everyone from hippie heroes like Gov't Mule and Grace Potter to critical faves Jason Isbell and Courtney Barnett. "If you love this kind of music, it's rooted deep inside you," says Peter Shapiro, promoter of Virginia's Lockn' fest. "It kind of reflects who you are."



Grace Potter

STEVE KNOPPER

Dead and Company

June 10th-July 30th

TICKETS \$40-\$150

"There is a lot left in this music to explore," Dead and Company drummer Mickey Hart says, explaining why the band – featuring singer-guitarist John Mayer in the Jerry Garcia hot spot – is following its 2015 tour with 24 stadium shows. "People can't wait to get to soundcheck," Hart says. "When that happens, something's right." The band will add 20 classics to the 60 songs in last fall's set lists – including, Hart hopes, 1970's "High Time" and the Nineties ballad "Liberty." Those tunes take "intensive study," the drummer admits. "We're going to crack out the nuggets, not the low-hanging fruit."

Bob Dylan/Mavis Staples

June 4th-August 14th

TICKETS \$55-\$135

As a teenager, Dylan loved Staple Singers records. "I said to myself, 'One day, you'll be standing with your arm around that girl,'" he said of Mavis Staples last year. (After they met in the Sixties, he famously proposed to her.) Now, they're reuniting for a 27-date tour of outdoor venues. Staples expects to delve into her late-Sixties Stax catalog, and Dylan has been focusing recently on post-1997 material. "I hope Bobby won't hide from me," says Staples. "I might ask him, 'If we get into a hotel that has a kitchenette, would you want me to cook for you?' I'll fix him whatever he wants."

Chris Stapleton

Through October 22nd

TICKETS \$30-\$149

Last year, Stapleton became the biggest new artist in country music with his platinum-selling *Traveler*. On his first major tour, he's inviting friends Jason Isbell and veteran hell-raiser Hank Williams Jr. to open select shows. Stapleton's band will include a rotating cast of country vets like harmonica player Mickey Raphael (of Willie Nelson's band) and pedal steel virtuoso Robby Turner (who once toured with Waylon Jennings). Expect lots of jamming, and covers ranging from Tom Petty to Prince. "I don't know if we're a direct fit for anything," says Stapleton. "So that makes it OK for us to do everything."

Sting/Peter Gabriel

June 21st-July 24th

TICKETS \$48-\$253

Sting and Gabriel first hit the road together for a series of benefit gigs for Amnesty International in 1986. A successful 2014 tour with Paul Simon inspired Sting to reunite with Gabriel for collaborative evenings heavy on the hits. "We'll hopefully find something unexpected and intriguing between us," says Sting. "It's going to be serious fun!"

Radiohead

July 26th-August 8th

TICKETS \$75-\$80

Radiohead's first U.S. tour in four years is a painfully short run of three festivals and two-

Future
and
Drake
onstage
in 2015



DRAKE AND FUTURE

JULY 20TH-SEPTEMBER 18TH

Tickets \$48-\$180

Drake and Future cemented their spaced-out chemistry on last year's mixtape *What a Time to Be Alive*, and they'll take those songs – plus all their solo hits – on their 27-city Summer Sixteen Tour. A double bill this heavy hasn't existed since Jay Z and Kanye West's 2011 *Watch the Throne* Tour. "We've got a great vibe," says Future. "Love is love. We made it work when people said it couldn't work."

night stands in New York and Los Angeles. It's unclear how the band will tackle complex, orchestral tracks like "Day Dreaming" and "Burn the Witch" from its new album, *A Moon Shaped Pool*. Will there be a string section? A choir to mirror the sky-high vocals on "Identikit" and "The Present Tense"? Or will the band channel the album's folk-rock side, as Thom Yorke did in France last December, when he premiered some tracks as wander-

ing-minstrel acoustic ballads? Expect the unexpected.

Miranda Lambert

Through September 17th

TICKETS \$30-\$125

Lambert has been working classic-rock covers – Foghat's "Slow Ride," Mountain's "Mississippi Queen" – into her sets of country hits. Recent gigs have been highly emotional affairs, in the wake of her divorce

from Blake Shelton. "My main concern is being real and genuine," she says. "I usually wear jeans or shorts and a T-shirt, and I just go sing my heart out. Sweat and tears, guitars and beer. That about sums it up!"

Weezer/Panic!

at the Disco

June 10th-August 6th

TICKETS \$18-\$100

Weezer's 1994 debut helped kick-start the emo movement that gave birth to Panic! at the Disco, so it's fitting the bands are going to hit the amphitheater circuit for a cross-generational tour. Weezer just released a California-pop LP that's perfect for summer nights, and Panic! surprised the world earlier this year with a chart-topping comeback album, *Death of a Bachelor*. "Panic! fans are super open-minded," says Rivers Cuomo. "So it's going to be a huge lovefest."

By DAVID BROWNE,
PATRICK DOYLE, DAVID
FRICKE, ANDY GREENE,
WILL HERMES, STEVE
KNOPPER and DAN KREPS

PHISH

JUNE 22ND-
SEPTEMBER 4TH

Tickets \$42-\$72

Last summer, Trey Anastasio joined the Grateful Dead for their Fare Thee Well concerts before spending the rest of the year on the road with Phish. "By New Year's, I just felt so loose," he says. "It reminds me of 1994. 1995. I kinda miss that." Phish took that energy into the studio all winter, recording songs Anastasio expects to debut on the road. "We're firing on all cylinders," says Anastasio. "Maybe it has something to do with the fact that we all turned 50, but there's a patience and a desire to really hear what the other band members have to say."



Anastasio

Best of the Rest

Joan Jett/Cheap Trick/Heart

July 14th-Sept. 23rd

The three bands – all recent Rock Hall inductees – will unite for the Rock Hall Three for All amphitheater tour. "It's going to be a blast," says Jett.

21 Pilots

July 17th-Aug. 11th

The chart-topping duo will tour arenas with a spectacle that includes stage dives and backflips. "These shows deserve to be special," says singer Tyler Joseph.

Jeff Beck/Buddy Guy

July 19th-Aug. 20th

Beck first saw Guy play in England in the early Sixties. "He blew my head off," says Beck. Now, the two team up for a summer shed run. Guy, who will turn 80 on the road, is out for blood. "If you don't want me to put on a show, don't bring me out," he says. "I don't hold back."

Don Henley

July 17th-Sept. 21st

Henley promises to include Eagles hits on his set list, which will be more poignant in light of Glenn Frey's death earlier this year.

ZZ Top/Gregg Allman

Aug. 16th-Oct. 7th

These two first toured together in 1971. Billy Gibbons expects to build on the camaraderie with epic jams like "Whipping Post." "There's going to be nothing but loudness and rock & roll in the forefront," he says.

Toots & the Maytals

June 15th-Aug. 13th

After three years off the road recovering from a stage injury, the reggae pioneer will bring classics like "Pressure Drop" to festivals and clubs. "I'm a little anxious," says Toots Hibbert. "I can't wait."

Prince's Final Days

He was an electrifying performer to the end – but his controlled superstar life also hid many red flags

BY DAVID BROWNE

AS MORE DETAILS HAVE EMERGED about Prince's death in late April, the mystery that engulfed his life has only deepened. But one thing is becoming clear: The funk-rock genius was struggling with a painful secret. Overwhelming evidence indicates that Prince was in the grips of an addiction to painkillers during the last years of his life.

To the world outside Paisley Park, Prince seemed vibrant and in control to the end. At one of his last shows, in Toronto on March 25th, he was typically animated: "Bouncing around the stage, clapping with his audience, running around the piano," says the venue's CEO, Mark Hammond. "He was having fun."

But offstage, it was a different story. It remains unclear when Prince began taking opioids and how much his inner circle knew of any possible addiction – though Prince's late half-brother Duane told his lawyer that Prince was addicted to cocaine and Percocet in the early 2000s, according to the attorney. Others close to Prince have suggested drug use may have been in response to a serious hip problem that he developed later in life.

The first public indication that anything was wrong came when Prince's private plane made an emergency landing in Illinois on April 15th, on the way home from a concert in Atlanta. Reports suggest that Prince overdosed on Percocet. He was carried off the plane by a bodyguard and given a shot of the anti-overdose medication Narcan by a local EMS.

He appeared to bounce back quickly. The next day, Prince biked to a record store to buy Stevie Wonder and Santana albums. That evening, he hosted a party at Paisley Park, where he showed off his new purple piano. He tweeted he was "#FeelingRejuvenated" the next day. On April 19th, he caught jazz singer Lizz Wright at a local club, Dakota. "As always, he was relaxed and polite with all," says Joe Doermann, the club's assistant manager.

On April 20th, Prince met with Michael Schulenberg, a family-medicine doctor who has been practicing for nearly 20 years. Prince received an unidentified prescription, his second in a few weeks from



1



2



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FAREWELL TO A GENIUS

- (1) Prince during the first of two shows on April 14th in Atlanta. The second would be his last ever. (2) Prince's sister Tyka Nelson will jointly handle his estate with five half-siblings. (3) Fans pay tribute outside Paisley Park. (4) Prince in a Walgreens parking lot, April 20th.

the same doctor. Later that day, Prince was reportedly seen at a local Walgreens.

Then, sometime that night, came a desperate cry for help: Someone in Prince's camp reached out to Howard Kornfeld, a Mill Valley, California, doctor who runs an outpatient clinic that specializes in treating addictions. Kornfeld's son Andrew took an overnight flight to Minneapolis, but he was too late. When Prince was found dead in a Paisley Park elevator the next morning, authorities reportedly discovered prescription opioids on his body and in Paisley Park. Although results of an autopsy may not be released until late May, reports indicate Prince may have had Percocet in his system.

According to experts, Percocet can be as addictive and dangerous as heroin. "You start out being able to just take one to get the pain relief you need," says Jonathan Wynbrandt, an assistant professor of medicine at Cleveland's Case Western Reserve University Medical School who has no involvement in the case. "But then you get folks who abuse the drug who have to take five, six, seven at a time. That's when you get respiratory difficulties, sudden death, cardiovascular problems."

In the aftermath of his death, many who worked with Prince are attempting to reconcile their image of him as a driven, health-conscious musician with information about his substance abuse. "He

didn't drink, he didn't smoke, no drugs," says Randy Phillips, who briefly managed Prince in the Nineties. Adds Sky Dangel, a DJ who spun on Prince's 2004 *Musicology* tour and at Paisley Park parties, "Everyone is flabbergasted – he was very anti-drug."

Longtime friend and New Power Generation drummer Kirk Johnson told investigators that Prince had been taken to a hospital for an undisclosed treatment in 2014 or 2015. Reports indicate that the DEA, as part of its investigation in conjunction with Carver County police, will attempt to determine if anyone in Prince's inner circle helped him obtain painkillers.

Prince led an intensely private life; it would have been easy to mask a drug problem. "Addiction is about secrecy," says Dangel. "Prince didn't go out with his guard down. He was in full makeup and ready to go."

Prince's penchant for privacy extended to his physical problems. Some close to him have speculated that, over the years, his relentless performances began to wear down his body. On the *Musicology* tour in 2004, says Dangel, Prince would routinely surprise audiences by emerging from a case rolled onto the stage. "I thought, 'What a great way to get to and from the stage,' but in retrospect, it makes me wonder," says Dangel. "There were a lot of golf carts and things where he didn't have to walk."

When Mavis Staples saw her old friend at an awards show a few years later, he wore some uncharacteristic footwear: sneakers. "Someone said, 'He needs hip-replacement surgery, but he won't have it, and he's in pain all the time,'" Staples recalls. But Prince's adherence to the tenets of Jehovah's Witnesses, a sect with restrictive beliefs about blood transfusions, nixed any surgery until 2010, when he reportedly had an operation on his hip. "Walking around with a cane was not just to look supercool," Prince's longtime hairstylist Kim Berry said recently. But despite the pain, he refused to slow down. "If his head was on fire, he'd put a hat on it and keep moving," recalls NPG keyboardist Morris Hayes. "He was about getting the task done."

THE ESTATE BATTLE

NO MATTER THE RESULT OF THE AUTOPSY, a crucial phase in Prince's legacy – the fight for control of his estate – is underway. At press time, a last will had not been discovered, which doesn't surprise Phillips, the former manager. "Trust me, there's not going to be one," he says. "He never thought about dying, and he would never sign a contract. He thought it was slavery."

If no will is found, the estate will be jointly handled by his sister Tyka, a 55-year-old gospel singer, and his five sur-



Prince's vault at Paisley Park

The Unheard Music

Thousands of hours of material are contained in the vault of Paisley Park, some of it bootlegged online, much of it still uncataloged. Here are a few gems that could be released if the archive is made public.

The Second Coming 1982

A live recording of the Minneapolis stop on the fiery *Controversy* tour – Prince romps through salacious classics like "Jack U Off" and "Dirty Mind."

'In a Large Room With No Light' 1986

This zigzagging, jazz-informed track was to be included on the unrealized *Dream Factory* album. Prince rerecorded the song himself in 2009, but the original remains unheard.

'Can I Play With You' 1986

When Miles Davis was working on his 1986 album *Tutu*, Prince sent him this unabashed party song, to which Davis added a trumpet part. It never made the album and still hasn't seen the light of day.

The Flesh: Junk Music 1986

For several days in 1988, Prince jammed on free-form instrumentals with Sheila E., Wendy and Lisa, sax man Eric Leeds and others. "It was amazing, fun stuff," recalls Prince ex-manager Alan Leeds. He considered releasing the album as the *Flesh*, with no band members listed.

The Undertaker 1993

Another undercover band – a Hendrix-inspired trio. Recorded in one day, the album included at least one cover (the Stones' "Honky Tonk Women") and Prince originals ("Dolphin," "The Ride") he later rerecorded.

'Musicology' tour live album 2004

Prince recorded and shot a Detroit stop on this now-legendary tour, where he performed solo acoustic versions of "Little Red Corvette," "Cream" and other songs. Says one Prince insider, "It was beautifully filmed, and it should be close, if not ready to go."



living half-siblings from his parents' other marriages – Norrine Nelson, Sharon Nelson, Omarr Baker, Alfred Jackson and John Nelson. A Minnesota judge appointed Bremer Trust, a local banking and investment firm, as special administrator to catalog the assets and oversee the estate for at least six months.

The battle over the estate could get intense. Fifteen lawyers – representing family members as well as those who work for Bremer – are now involved. To deflect false-heir claims, the judge ordered a sample of Prince's DNA extracted. (The first claim arrived on May 9th, when a woman announced via court papers that she and Prince had a son while having "unprotected sexual intercourse" in a hotel room in 1976 – two years before Prince's first album.)

The financial stakes are considerable. In the two weeks after his passing, Prince's back catalog sold 1.31 million albums and 3.93 million digital tracks, and five of his albums were in the Top 10 one week. Two years ago, Prince gained ownership of the master tapes of many of his classic Warner Bros. albums when he entered

into a new agreement with the label. Prince also owned multiple properties, including the nine-acre Paisley Park in Chanhassen, Minnesota (valued at \$7 million). By some estimates, the net worth of Prince's holdings may be more than \$300 million.

Prince's estate will also benefit from the thousands of hours of unreleased live and studio material tucked away on shelves in his fabled vault in the basement of Paisley Park. Although Bremer is legally in charge of the vault, it has yet to be determined who will sift through that material. "It would take a lifetime," says Alan Leeds, Prince's former tour manager. "But who wouldn't want to be involved?"

Blogger Jeremiah Freed, who helped promote Prince's last Paisley Park dance party, says he is in possession of what may be Prince's last video: a performance clip for "Xtralovable" (from 2015's *HitnRun Phase Two*) that shows Prince in silhouettes. But in light of estate issues, medical reports and possible lawsuits, it's unclear when that video may be seen by the public.

In the meantime, friends and fans alike are left puzzling over the duality of Prince, starting with the celebratory bash he threw at his home during the last weekend of his life. "The dance party was to show he was all right," says Freed. "When you look back on it now, we should have known that him wanting to prove everything was all right should have been a red flag."

Additional reporting by ANDY GREENE

Santana: Finally Reborn

The band's classic lineup stunned Woodstock, then began to implode. Now, it has pulled off one of rock's most overdue reunions

BY ANDY GREENE

I JUST HAD AN EPIPHANY!" SAYS Carlos Santana, during a rehearsal at the Las Vegas House of Blues. His band, Santana, has just finished the raucous 1971 track "Everybody's Everything." "This song is like a nice filet mignon," he continues. "We can play it in the set right after 'Evil Ways' and 'Soul Sacrifice.'" The group starts "Love Makes the World Go Round," from its new album, *Santana IV*, but Carlos stops it abruptly. It seems Michael Shrieve is hitting his drums a little too hard. "I don't want it to sound like Bruce Springsteen," Santana says. "Try it softer."

If the band sounds a bit rusty, there's a good reason: It hasn't played a full show together since 1971. After a nasty breakup, the members headed in all directions, ending up everywhere from other famous bands to jail. Although Carlos carried on under the Santana name – eventually selling 11.8 million copies of 1999's *Supernatural* – his group's classic lineup cast a long shadow. These were the guys who forged Santana's signature sound, who cut hits like "Black Magic Woman" and "Oye Como Va," and who played a stunning set at Woodstock, after Carlos took a hit of mescaline from Jerry Garcia and tripped so hard he saw his guitar neck turn into a snake.

By the time Santana take the stage at the House of Blues in front of a capacity crowd, the kinks from yesterday's rehearsal have been worked out. The band opens with a long version of the 1969 instrumental "Soul Sacrifice," with every member taking a solo. As Shrieve re-creates the iconic drum solo he played at Woodstock, Carlos beams with pride from the side of the stage, and the rest of the set smokes. "We can now offer each other 45 years of acquired wisdom," he says the morning after. "We all have a deeper appreciation for one another, and now we have a second chance."

They first came together as the Santana Blues Band in San Francisco's Mission District



REUNITED

Carlos Santana (above) in Las Vegas in March. Below, from left: Rolie, Santana, Schon, Shrieve and Carabello. "We can now offer each other 45 years of acquired wisdom," Santana says. "We all have a deeper appreciation of one another."

in 1966. The group's name was eventually shortened to Santana, a decision that singer Gregg Rolie swears (almost convincingly) never bothered him. "Rolie' would have been a terrible name," he says. "I've tried to focus on the positive side of things rather than who got the name and who didn't. The music's incredible, and I was part of that."

Seventeen-year-old guitar prodigy Neal Schon joined their ranks for 1971's *Santana III*, though by that point the group was starting to melt down. "The rock & roll lifestyle was killing people," says Shrieve. "I can watch old videos of us playing and just smell the cocaine. Man, that's evil stuff."

Santana, whose thoughts routinely veer toward the mystical, has a different take: "I never took drugs – I took medicine. I wanted to open the door to something I didn't understand, so I took peyote. I took LSD. A few times I tried cocaine and my whole body said, 'This is a distraction from the spirit and it will throw you in a ditch.'"

But drugs were not the only issue. "We were too young to appreciate it the first time around," says Santana. "I was so invested in my agenda. It was my, my, my, my, my, my. Also, nobody was equipped to handle the adulation."

There was also an intense disagreement over the band's sound. Rolie and Schon wanted to embrace their rock sides. Carlos wanted to experiment with jazz fusion, and he brought a parade of new musicians into the studio to record 1972's *Caravanserai*. The results horrified Columbia Records chief Clive



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Davis. "I remember sitting in his office and just staring into a candle," says Santana. "Clive said, 'There's not a single here within a thousand miles! Why do you have to do this? There's already Weather Report! There's already Herbie [Hancock] and Miles [Davis].' I said, 'We don't want to rubber-stamp another 'Black Magic Woman' and 'Oye Como Va.' Santana is thirsty for adventure!'"

Tensions within Santana got so bad that Carlos was essentially tossed out of his own band during one East Coast tour, in 1971. He had given the group an ultimatum: Either certain members lay off the drugs and devote more time to practice, or he was out. The band chose to fly off to tour without him. But after a couple of shows, it became quite clear that a Carlos-free Santana wasn't going to work. "I think the first one was at Boston Garden, and it went off OK," says Schon. "But then I got heckled the whole time the second night. And that was the end of that."

Rolie and Schon left in 1974 to form Journey. Rolie stayed with the new band until 1980, then watched as a new frontman, Steve Perry, helped turn Journey into "Don't Stop Believin'"—powered stadium killers. Rolie was left in a strange position: He was the original singer in two hugely popular bands, but hardly anyone had ever heard of him. When he told people he sang "Black Magic Woman" and "Evil Ways," they often didn't even believe him. "I was never bitter," he says. "I was always like, 'Good for you guys. I helped build that.'"

Some of Rolie's former Santana bandmates suffered worse fates. Bassist David Brown died of liver and kidney failure in 2000. Timbales player Jose "Chepito" Areas was arrested in 1996 for allegedly molesting two children, and wasn't invited back for the reunion. Percussionist Marcus "The Magnificent" Malone was with Santana at the band's formation, but months before Woodstock he was caught having sex with another man's wife. In the ensuing fight, he stabbed the man to death. Malone was convicted of manslaughter and spent three years in San Quentin.

Three years ago, a TV news crew discovered Malone living on the streets of Oakland and orchestrated an on-camera reunion with Santana, who hoped to bring him into the studio. "We got together after our meeting on the street," Carlos says, "and I could tell he hadn't played in years. He didn't have the strength or stamina."

In 1997, Santana's Woodstock lineup (minus Brown and Carlos) released an album under the name Abraxas Pool. But once again the members learned the public had no interest in a Santana-free Santana. "That was a really good record," says Shrieve. "But if Carlos wasn't there, people didn't care."



SOUL SACRIFICE

Shrieve, Carabello and Carlos Santana at Woodstock, August 1969

Shrieve – whose biggest brush with fame post-Santana was playing percussion on the Rolling Stones' *Emotional Rescue* – swears he wasn't bitter at the success that Carlos achieved without him and his bandmates, not even when *Supernatural* swept the 2000 Grammys. "I cried in

"The Doors are my favorite group," Santana says. "And I keep saying we're like them if only they had some more discipline."

joy," Shrieve insists. "He deserved every bit of it."

The classic Santana lineup played its Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony in 1998, but members remained skeptical a full reunion would ever happen. It took a series of random encounters with Schon to convince Carlos to reunite the band. "I kept running into Carlos in the Bay Area," Schon says. "I said to him, 'If you really want to turn everybody's head around, we should get the original band back together.'" Schon eventually wore Carlos down. "It seemed like everywhere I go, this cat is there," says Santana. "His eyes became very vulnerable, very ego-less."

Finally, in 2014, Schon was summoned to Santana's rehearsal space in Las Vegas for what he thought was a meeting about a possible reunion. "I arrive and hear [the band playing]," says the guitarist. "I said, 'I thought we were gonna talk.' He goes, 'No, man, this is the meeting.' It was surreal."

The bandmates cut an album of new material within weeks and called it *Santana IV* to make clear they were carrying on right where they left off. "When we play together, it can't help but sound like anyone but us," says percussionist Michael Carabello. "It feels good to be home."

The morning after the reunion concert, Santana is sitting in the conference room of his new Las Vegas office. An original Woodstock poster hangs on one wall, along with a mural of ticket stubs from his 1984 co-headlining tour with Bob Dylan. There's a tiny meditation room with an image of Buddha on the wall near a detailed chart of the seven chakras.

Santana is feeling good about last night's show. "The Doors are my favorite group," he says, "and I keep saying we're like them if only they had the sort of discipline that doesn't lead to distraction and destruction." But even in the wake of such a triumph, his mind drifts to other places. He wants to fight the rise of Trumpism by staging a grand summit of peace and love: "What I want is to invite the pope, the Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, and others who have won Nobel Peace Prizes, seven men and seven women, and invite them together, like in a *Star Trek* movie. We can go to the Sydney Opera House or a resort in Honolulu."

Future plans for the original Santana are unclear. Rolie spent the past four years as the keyboardist in Ringo Starr's All Starr Band and is back on the road with them this summer; Schon has more than 50 Journey dates on the books. "There's been no talk of a tour," says Shrieve. "It drives you crazy, but I've come to the realization that if it's gonna happen, it's gonna happen, just like this whole thing."

THE TITLE OF ERIC CLAPTON's new album, *I Still Do*, comes from something his great-aunt Audrey told him before she died a couple of years ago. "I went to see her and said, 'I want to thank you for being so kind to me when I was a little boy,'" says Clapton, who was born out of wedlock and raised by relatives outside London. "She said, 'I liked you. And I still do.' That's blessed, really. It just says it all." *I Still Do* is a classic-Clapton mix of roots, reflection and guitar solos; he covers Robert Johnson, Skip James and Bob Dylan. Clapton also revives an old partnership: The album was produced by Glyn Johns, who worked on the guitarist's 1977 hit *Slowhand*. "He is still pretty aggressive and very fast," Clapton says. "You get him on a board with a band, and it's magic."

How do you look back at *Slowhand*? It is your biggest-selling solo album, but you made it when you were drinking heavily.

It was a haven, a sanctuary. The music counterbalanced the difficulty in my personal life. The strength of *Slowhand* was in the people playing together – [bassist] Carl Radle, [keyboardist] Dickie Sims, [drummer] Jamie Oldaker. And it was Glyn seeing that energy in the room and harnessing it.

How did you reconnect with Johns?

He put out a book [2014's *Sound Man*]. I'm in it. And he's not very flattering. We had some fairly unpleasant skirmishes early on, when I was really bang at it. Later on, we did some work together for Ronnie Lane and Pete Townshend, an album called *Rough Mix*. Glyn changed his opinion. He thought I was more conscientious working for other people.

In the book, he also said he hadn't seen me in a long time and wasn't sure if we were still friends. I called him, we went out for a meal and I said, "Let's do something."

How much of this record was cut live in the studio?

A lot of it. For me, the best live one is [James'] "Cypress Grove." I doubt we can get that any better onstage. But Glyn works with tape. That gives you another set of disciplines. You try to get everything on the floor. You overdub only if you have to.

Do you plot out your solos before a take?

No. I let my hands do the talking. Then my brain catches up. I'm hearing it after it happens. Then I go, "Oh, that wasn't very good. Try doing this." That happens, but the best bit is still the one

Q&A



Eric Clapton

The singer-guitarist on his new album, visiting America with Cream, how he comes up with his solos, and when he'll hit the road next

BY DAVID FRICKE

before I actually thought about what I was going to do. My hands are in front of me a lot of the time.

Was that true during the long jams in Cream?

Any stuff that sounds good is because it's intuitive. It would go in sections. The solo starts, then I catch up. I start to walk a straight line, then run out of steam. My hands have to do something to carry me to the next phase – then that bit will be good. It's a progression of trial and error.

You cover Dylan's "I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine" on the album. You've talked about how the Band transformed your perception of the blues but rarely about Dylan's impact.

I tried to cut "One of Us Must Know (Sooner or Later)" way, way back. I had visions of recording "Series of Dreams." But this one nagged me. I was intrigued to know what moved him to write it. It's a sad song, about remorse. I've done a lot of his stuff live. I used to play "Not Dark Yet" [on *Time Out of Mind*]. That is one of the most beautiful songs ever written. It says everything about growing old and letting go of things.

You also cover Leroy Carr's "Alabama Woman Blues." As a young Englishman, how did you relate to references like old Southern train lines?

My point of reference was zero. I grew up in an English village where we didn't even have a train station. Then I came to New York with Cream to play the Murray the K show, and I saw firsthand all this stuff I was hearing about all my life. To walk around Manhattan as a 20-year-old – it was magical. You would see someone with a biker jacket or cowboy boots, drinking malted milk. I was in heaven.

You keep coming back to America to play. What do you see now?

In Cream, we traveled around America in a car. It's impossible to believe. I was worn to a frazzle. I must have weighed 100 pounds. I don't think we ate at all. We just played every night. Everywhere we went was different. The more I would come back, everywhere started to look the same – the fast-food places, the franchising. Everything got bland. It's all gone – to where, I don't know.

Are you going to head back on tour this year?

I've had some health issues with my back and a neurological thing that is tricky that affects my hands. If there's no serious fallout, I'll start looking to do some work. If there is, I'll have to figure out what to do next – maybe take it easy for a while.



HOLY ROLLER
Rogen directs Cooper in *Preacher*.

Seth Rogen Gets Serious

The comedian on going against type to adapt the noir comic 'Preacher' and wrestling with religion

BY DAVID FEAR

SETH ROGEN WILL TELL YOU THAT one downside to being a famous comedian is no one takes you seriously when you ask to throw someone out of a plane at 10,000 feet. "So we're filming this fight scene on an airplane, trying not to make it a clusterfuck of punches and kicks," he says of making his new TV show, *Preacher*, an ad-

PREACHER SUNDAYS, 9 P.M., AMC

aptation of the Nineties cult comic about a Texas man of the cloth tracking down a mysterious killer. "My partner Evan [Goldberg] and I said we want to actually throw a guy out of the plane. Everyone thought we were joking until, three days later, we're like, 'So how's it going with the whole throwing-a-dude-out-of-a-plane thing, folks?' The crew went, 'Wait, you were serious?!'"

The upcoming AMC series is a decade-long labor of love for Rogen and Goldberg — both of whom discovered the underground comic while friends in high school — and stars the British actor Dominic Cooper as Jesse, a small-town clergyman with a hidden criminal past who battles redneck bullies, government agents and a literal demon from outer space. Along for the ride are his best friend, the Irish vampire Cassidy (Joseph Gilgun), and handy-with-a-gun ex-girlfriend Tulip (Ruth Negga). "We'd always wanted to make a movie or TV show out of the material," Rogen

says. "We were always pitching ourselves as the people who should make it."

With *Preacher*, the duo best known for raunch-coms like *Superbad* wanted to take on horror and go-for-broke action, but their efforts went nowhere until *Breaking Bad* producer Sam Catlin agreed to help develop the comic into a series. Suddenly, they found themselves directing a scene in which a disembodied arm holding a chain saw skitters across a church floor — "That was my favorite thing ever," Rogen says — not to mention pulling off the climax of the show's pilot, where a skydiver chucks himself into the void.

Cooper, who signed on after a 40-minute meeting with Rogen and Goldberg, was surprised by *Preacher*'s contemplative moments. "It's not just penis-in-hand jokes," he says. A central scene involves Jesse and Cassidy sitting in a jail cell, discussing the nature of faith. "One of my favorite things about the books were the theological arguments," Rogen says. "When I watched them film that scene, I thought, 'This is special. This is how I felt when I first read the comics.'"

Which isn't to say that the show is all chin-stroking and fight scenes — it definitely has a sense of humor. "Yeah, we find time to blow up Tom Cruise," Rogen says, referring to the show's running joke about the Scientologist spontaneously combusting. "We're hoping he's flattered, because we could have blown up any A-list star, and we chose him."

The WATCH LIST

The good, the bad and the deeply disturbing



HOT

▼ **John Slattery** brings his devious Roger Sterling to *Veep*.

▲ **Maria Bamford** is brave and hilarious on *Lady Dynamite*.



◀ **Alternate-reality TV: Sober Marc Maron** plays his fictionalized self in rehab.

► **Maya & Marty:** Here's hoping for a duet with Beyoncé and Ed Grimley.



◀ **Rock This Boat:** all five New Kids set sail for Season 2 on a ship full of fans.



▼ **Can Terrence Howard** save *Wayward Pines*?



◀ **The Jesus-juice-chugging Dallas housewives** are the worst yet.

NOT

FROM TOP: LEWIS JACOBS/AMC; DOUG HYUN/NETFLIX; LACEY TERRELL/HBO; TYLER GOLDEN/IFC; MARY ELLEN MATTHEWS/NBC; POPTV; MICHAEL LARSEN/BRAVO; BRENDAN MEADOWS/FOX

'Game of Thrones' Resurrected

The sword-and-sorcery epic was coming off its dulllest season – so it had to break all the rules

BY ROB SHEFFIELD

AS DR. FRANKENSTEIN WOULD say: "It's alive!" Like Kit Harington's Jon Snow, *Game of Thrones* has been resurrected from the dead, and like Snow, it is permanently changed by the experience. The excellent new season is a drastic improvement over last year – it's moving faster than ever, pushing past the timeline of George R.R. Martin's novels.

GAME OF THRONES
SUNDAYS, 9 P.M., HBO

Season Five ended with a sorry sight: Jon Snow lying on the ground, a bloody pulp, ventilated with knife wounds at the hands of his own Night's Watch men, who'd lined up to take turns stabbing him, declaring, "For the Watch!" After a year of rumors, denials and heated fan debate, Snow got his vengeance after the red witch, Carice van Houten's Melisandre, brought him back to life using one of her magic spells. He hanged his rebel betrayers and announced, "My watch has ended." But for *Thrones* fans, the watch just got a lot more exciting.

On some level, obviously, this is cheating. *Game of Thrones* has always shocked us with who gets killed and who doesn't, but until now, it's obeyed the house rule that the dead stay dead. Now that Snow walks among the living again, this is no longer the case, which makes *Thrones* a different kind of story. There's no way to unbang that gong. All bets are off. The season finale could end with Myrcella and Robb Stark snorting Brienne's ashes off Stannis' naked



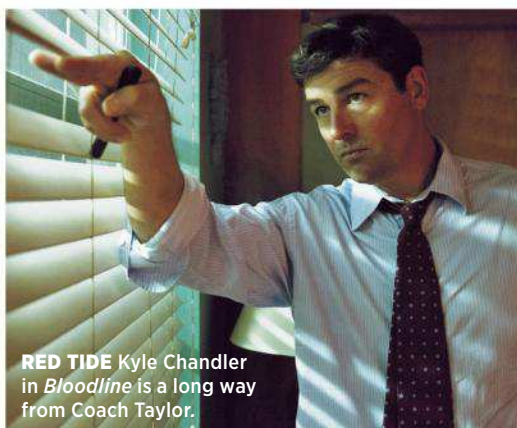
STAY WOKE
Jon Snow (Kit Harington) comes back from the dead.

ass and nobody would have any reasonable grounds for complaint.

And yet, *Game of Thrones* made the resurrection work on an emotional level. It had to be done. Last season was the grimmest and dreariest *Thrones* chapter, one that toned down gratuitous nudity in favor of cringe-inducing violence, and couldn't even get that right. The season indulged in tedious subplots, like Jaime's (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau) Sand Snakes dalliance in Dorne, and Cersei's (Lena Headey) tangle with the Sparrows in King's Landing. It looked like *Thrones* might turn into *True Blood*: a pre-

dictable, one-note satire of religious fanatics, with regular sex-torture breaks.

But *Game of Thrones* has been breaking the rules of TV storytelling since Season One, when Ned Stark (Sean Bean) lost his head, a twist that seemed unthinkable till the ax came down. The revival of Jon Snow is in the same category. Snow himself seems confused by what's happened to him – he's returned as a wearier, more battered version of the dim bulb he used to be – and like the rest of us, he's unclear about what might be coming next. But that's because, at this point, it really is a whole new story. **2**



RED TIDE Kyle Chandler in *Bloodline* is a long way from Coach Taylor.

'Bloodline': Excellent Beach Noir

There's a great moment in the superb second season of *Bloodline* where two brothers sit side by side. One

BLOODLINE
NETFLIX

asks, "Hey, man, do you – you know, you ever feel guilty at all?" The other frowns and says, "You can't think like that." Indeed, *Bloodline* revisits the monstrous Rayburn family and their Florida Keys resort, where the lush scenery just accentuates how dead

these people are inside. Kyle Chandler and Linda Cardellini are brilliant as siblings with a filthy secret or two to hide. The first season ended with a murder that came as such a shock, it was hard to imagine how *Bloodline* could keep going. Yet what makes the new season so devastating is the certainty that your secrets never stay buried. As one Rayburn says, "The son of a bitch might be dead, but he's still making my life miserable." And on *Bloodline*, there's enough misery to feed a family. **R.S.**

RandomNotes



Axl Shoots to Thrill!

Axl Rose was nervous about joining AC/DC after singer Brian Johnson was forced to sit out their European tour. "I'd sing 'Back in Black' in the car, but I'd never tried to sing the songs fully," he said. In Lisbon, Rose put those fears to rest, nailing Bon Scott-era cuts like "Shot Down in Flames," which he joked was "about my life story." Rose said he was happy to help AC/DC avoid the legal problems that come with canceling shows: "I've gone through that a little bit!"



ENTER STRIKEMAN

Lars Ulrich threw out the first pitch for his beloved hometown San Francisco Giants. Expect a new Metallica album and tour soon: "I think it will be a pretty in-your-face year," he says.



Days earlier, Ulrich was courtside at Game Two of the Warriors-Blazers series. "I had a ball in the Bay Area all weekend long," he says.



BALLERS

Madonna caught up with the Weeknd (whom she called "amazing") and Diplo at the Met Gala.

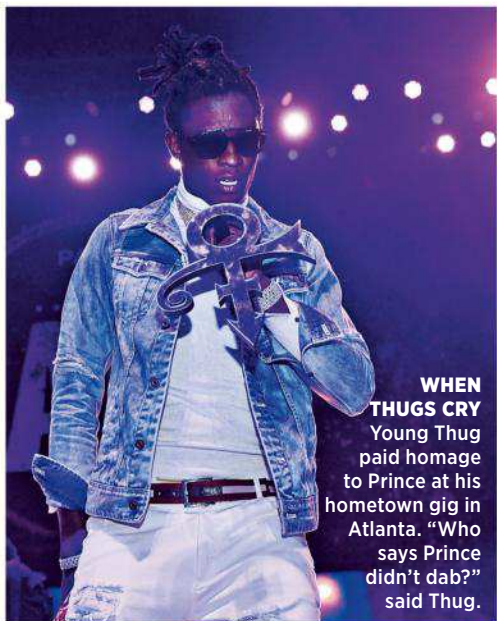


"I love her more than is normal," said Taylor Swift of Beyoncé.



SILVIO GOES SOLO

Having wrapped up the E Street Band's *River* tour, Steven Van Zandt hit a West Village Italian restaurant.



WHEN THUGS CRY
Young Thug paid homage to Prince at his hometown gig in Atlanta. "Who says Prince didn't dab?" said Thug.

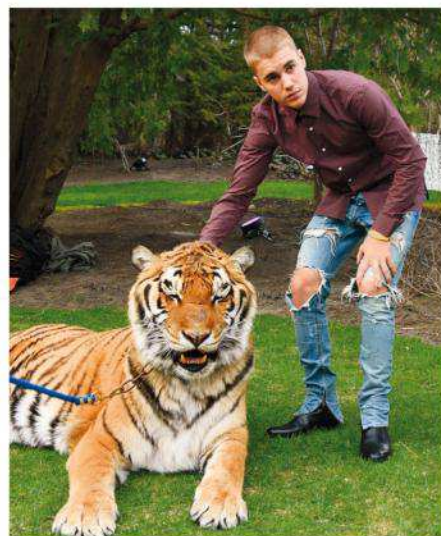


Hello, Dolly

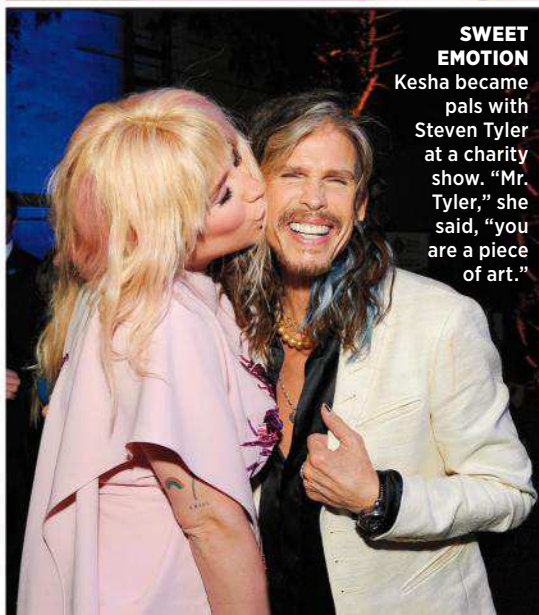
Thousands turned out for the biggest day of the year in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee: local girl Dolly Parton's annual homecoming parade. Parton sat on a float modeled after the new dinner theater at her Dollywood theme park. "Who says you can't go home again and again?" she says. She'll be playing stripped-down versions of her hits on tour this summer: "I'm going to ride that wave until I get washed ashore!"



CUBA MEETS THE KARDASHIANS
Kim, Kanye and daughter North cruised through downtown Havana on a Kardashian family vacation, with a camera crew in tow. "Having no phone service was so amazing!" tweeted Kim.



TIGER BEAT Just days after this photo op, Justin Bieber, coincidentally enough, said he's no longer taking photos with fans because it makes him "feel like a zoo animal."



SWEET EMOTION
Kesha became pals with Steven Tyler at a charity show. "Mr. Tyler," she said, "you are a piece of art."



DOUBLE TROUBLE
With the help of a marching band and Mick Fleetwood, Will Ferrell bested Chad Smith at a charity drum-off in L.A. "That guy knows how to create a spectacle," says Smith.

Will Virtual Reality Change Your Life?

How a teenager created Oculus Rift in his parents' SoCal garage, sold it for \$2 billion and may have launched a digital revolution

BY DAVID KUSHNER

FOR DECADES, VIRTUAL REALITY HAS FAILED TO DELIVER ON its great promise. But on March 28th, Oculus Rift, a breakthrough VR system, debuted – finally heralding the arrival of a technology seemingly pulled from a sci-fi future. On a recent spring morning, in a soundproof studio on the San Mateo, California, campus of Facebook – just days before the \$600 Rift's release – I'm testing out the Oculus headset in a mountain-climbing simulation created by Crytek, a team of artists and coders that has spent the past year meticulously scanning and re-creating vistas from the Alps to Halong Bay, Vietnam. The experience, which teleports me to a jagged cliff in a virtual world

spanning 50 square miles, is so realistic that I can barely look down – when I do, my knees buckle and my palms sweat. Finally, my brain has to interrupt: *Dude, you're not really here.*

In the past, heavy headsets, chunky graphics and sluggish latency have hindered the suspension of disbelief in virtual reality. But now, in Oculus' dozens of "experiences," as the company dubs them, you can live out your guitar-god dreams in Rock Band VR, float weightless in deep outer space in Adrift or hack through *Tron*-like computer nodes in Darknet. In each of these, you're not just playing, you're transported.

Palmer Luckey, the Rift's 23-year-old visionary creator in flip-flops, is giving me an exclusive glimpse into the VR future at Facebook, which bought his startup in 2014 for \$2 billion, landing Luckey on *Forbes'* list of America's richest entrepreneurs under 40. For Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg, Luckey and his crew are bringing the ultimate sci-fi fantasy to life. "Oculus' mission," Zuckerberg stated shortly after the purchase, "is to enable you to experience the impossible."

VR makes the impossible possible by tricking your eyes, and brain, into thinking you're someplace else. The Oculus headset combines motion-sensing hardware, positional tracking and Pixar-level graphics to let you interact with and explore simulated worlds. To crank up the experience of climbing, the developers used photogrammetry – a scanning process through which they capture real surfaces (like the jagged cracks of a limestone perch) into a virtual space.

While companies like *The New York Times* have been producing and distributing what they call virtual reality, seen with inexpensive Google Cardboard viewers, their technology is more like VR-lite: 360-degree videos that keep you stuck in a fixed position as you crane around. The Rift lets you watch these too, but also has the power to deliver a truer VR experience – essentially, putting you *inside* a video game. You move, look and play just as in real life, except the world around you is computer-simulated. "What gives you that next layer of amazingness in VR is that you're the one in control," says neuroscientist David Eagleman. "You can look

left and look right, and your brain gets the feedback it expects."

But VR isn't just about games. Silicon Valley, Hollywood and the military are betting on its broader implications because, says Luckey, "they know it's the next major computing platform." And VR is only the beginning. With so-called "mixed reality" headsets, you can see computer-generated objects – say, a flock of virtual sea gulls – float in real space around you. Then there's augmented-reality glasses, transparent displays that let you see information like the name and occupation of a neighbor as she passes by. And with HTC, Sony and Microsoft also rolling out VR gear this year, competition is high. Goldman Sachs predicts all of this to become an \$80 billion industry by 2025. As venture capitalist Marc Andreessen, co-creator of one of the first browsers, Netscape Navigator, said after his firm led an early investment of \$75 million into Oculus, it "will redefine fundamental human experiences in areas like film, education, architecture and design."

VR aims to alter our lives in staggering ways. Instead of chatting with a friend on a webcam, you'll "teleport" into a shared simulation and interact as if you're, for example, walking down a re-creation of the same Brooklyn street together. Instead of watching *Jurassic World* in a theater, you'll look up at a dinosaur slobbering over you. The Virtual Reality Company, a movie studio with Steven Spielberg on its board of advisers, is creating what co-founder Guy Primus calls "one of the first great tentpole cinematic experiences" for VR, expected to hit headsets this year. It will launch with Spielberg's new film *Ready Player One*, based on the novel of the same name by Ernie Cline, which describes a virtual world of pop-culture past called the OASIS. For the film, Cline reveals, "they're going to create the OASIS for real as an immersive, networked virtual reality that will exist as a real thing. People will go home from the movie and log in and experience it in virtual-reality goggles."



At the same time, concerns about how virtual reality may affect our brains are rising. Some researchers worry that the deeper we go into virtual worlds, the further we'll leave this one behind. "There is a very good chance that we will crave VR," says Sherry Turkle, a director at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "But the promises that VR will enhance our humanity, increase our empathy, all of this, I am afraid are overblown." Yet the verdict is still out. "We as a scientific community just don't know," says Beau Cronin, a computational neuroscientist who studies VR. "The brain might adapt to this new environment in a long-term way. That's entirely plausible."

THE LONG ROAD TO TODAY'S virtual reality is littered with clunky arcade games (Dactyl Nightmare) and goofy gear (Nintendo's Virtual Boy) that never delivered. "It always seemed like the technology is just around the corner," says Cline. "But then the 21st century came around and it still didn't exist."

Little did anyone know that a prodigy in his parents' garage in Long Beach, California, was going to make VR a reality. Palmer Luckey was home-schooled by his mother, Julie, and weaned as a gearhead by his car-salesman dad, Donald. Encouraged to explore his interests, Palmer became a gam-

ing fanatic with a gift for invention. His engineering mishaps are nerd lore: the time he zapped a permanent blind spot onto his retina with a laser; the day he blasted himself across his garage on a Tesla coil. "I got shocked a lot," he once said. "Looking back, it's honestly a miracle I am not dead."

But the mad scientist was also an ambitious entrepreneur. Raising \$36,000 from fixing iPhones, the 16-year-old built the ultimate gaming rig: a headset display that was perfect for VR. Luckey's genius was in realizing that much of the foundation for VR – such as powerful processors and motion-tracking software – was already in place. He just grabbed the parts he needed and hacked them into something new. Luckey ripped apart early off-the-shelf VR headsets, and fixed in alternate displays. Some left him physically sick – a problem caused by the lag between a person's head movements and what's displayed onscreen. Finally, with a mobile PC and a couple of magnifying lenses, he made a VR headset that was cheap, fast and worked.

"I was just screwing around," he says, sitting in Oculus' office. "People who tried it started saying, 'Hey, this is a lot better than anything else that is out there.'" Among them was John Carmack, co-creator of the seminal first-person shooters *Doom* and *Quake*. In 2012, he gave Luckey his big break by showing his invention at the Electronic Entertainment Expo, North America's largest video-game trade show, calling it "the best VR demo probably the world has ever seen." Within a month, Luckey raised more than \$2 million on Kickstarter to co-found his company, Oculus, with three friends. He poached an Apple whiz, who refined the motion-tracking sensors and displays for better fidelity. By 2014, they hit the ultimate dot-com lottery: a \$2 billion acquisition from Facebook.

Like Luckey, Zuckerberg sees VR as "a new communication platform," as he put it when he announced the buyout. In the social networking of the future, we will teleport into a virtual world together. "Imagine enjoying a courtside seat at a game," Zuckerberg stated, "studying in a classroom of students and teachers all over the world, or consulting with a doctor face-to-face – just by putting on goggles in your home."

"Our visions were basically the same, in terms of what we wanted to build," Luckey says about Zuckerberg. "I am a gamer, but if you look at virtual reality and how it's been depicted in science fiction, it's not depicted as a gaming technology." According to the VR novels that line the cubicles here – William Gibson's *Neuromancer*,

ROLLING STONE REPORTS

Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*, and *Ready Player One* – we will work, have sex and even die there. “It’s depicted,” Luckey goes on, “as a technology to create parallel digital universes.”

All sorts of nongaming things are already happening in VR. A surgeon in England recently live-streamed the first operation in 360-degree video, which allows medical students to view it in their headsets as though they are seeing it with their own eyes. The Department of Defense has tested Virtual Iraq and Virtual Afghanistan to treat soldiers with PTSD, which allows vets to explore simulations of Middle East scenes in the company of a therapist. The site YouVisit lets anyone upload and share their VR experiences (programmed on a computer or shot with a 360 camera) – from tours of Dartmouth College to fashion shows in Moscow.

As Oculus co-founder and CEO Brendan Iribe, the natty 36-year-old businessman to Luckey’s egghead genius, says of VR, games are just the beginning. “In a decade or two,” he tells me, “there will be this time when more and more of your daily life is spent inside a pair of glasses. You can teleport to the office. You can teleport to London. You can teleport to the Mayan ruins.”

WITH THE DEEP POCKETS OF Facebook at his disposal, Luckey spends all his time overseeing the VR factory, where T-shirted young men hunch at workstations, soldering goggles on Styrofoam heads. Unlike most antiseptic dot-coms, there’s real industriousness here. The air smells metallic. A sign on a door reads **DO NOT ENTER. ROBOT EXPERIMENTATION IN PROGRESS.**

Luckey, a college dropout, seems to relish the shop class he’s made here. Like Zuckerberg, who popularized his Adidas slides, Luckey’s default footwear are flip-flops. His office is dorm-room messy, with a *Back to the Future* poster on the wall. At lunch, he readily joins the line at the cafe, just another man-boy hankering for mac and cheese. “There are days when I do nothing but play games and test things all day long,” he says.

Oculus’ studio head, Jason Rubin, a veteran of the video-game industry and, at 46, twice his boss’s age, says that rather than putting himself in charge, Luckey surrounds himself with biz guys so that he

can focus on the big vision. “There aren’t a lot of people his age that have the ability to look at themselves and say, ‘Actually, I’m not a Mark Zuckerberg. What I am is a far more creative but nonmanagerial person,’” Rubin says, adding it’s all the better for the company. “I live in today, and he lives in the future.”

Right now, Luckey can’t get me back into the future fast enough. Not long after my arrival, he turns to his aide and tells her, “Let’s put him into Bullet Train.” I don my headset and am immediately riding in an empty subway car through a dark, flashing tunnel. As the train screeches to a halt, an army of cyborgs storms at me, guns blaz-

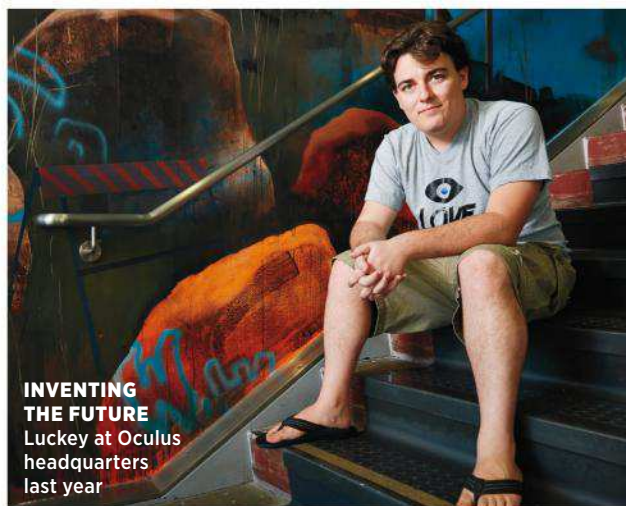
nology, and VR is no different. Pornographers, like all game programmers, are free to create content for VR devices, and, as Todd Glider – CEO of BaDoink, a VR-porn production company – puts it, the industry’s goal is “real telepresence,” engaging your whole body. BaDoink is working with Kiiroo, developers whose “teledildonic” vibrators and orifices pulse and pump along with the action onscreen. Eventually, we may be having virtual sex with one another via dolls, devices and headsets – and the industry is expected to grow to \$1 billion by 2020. “I always say Luckey ought to pay us a referral fee for every sale of Oculus,” Glider says.

In March, when the Rift came out, reviews were mixed. Oculus launched without the wireless Touch controllers that let you manipulate objects, and an “unexpected component shortage” delayed shipment of some Rifts until August. By comparison, the HTC Vive shipped with wireless handsets and also “room scale” VR, which allows you to roam as you, say, dodge zombies. Yet Luckey is dismissive of doubters. “I don’t care if people believe in using the product that we have right now today,” he says. “It’s not the one that billions of people are going to use.” In other words, Facebook has the fortune and reach to make the long bet on VR – which could leave others behind.

Luckey says the longest he’s spent in the Rift is “about 16 hours.” He pauses. “To be clear, I had bathroom breaks and took breaks to eat.” Dr. Frank Steinicke, a professor at the University of Hamburg, spent 24 hours in Oculus VR to study its effects. Besides dried-out eyes and nausea, he experienced strong moments of presence – in one case, feeling colder when his virtual sun went down. “We should be concerned about what VR is doing to us and what it could be doing to the brain,” he says, “and if we wear for long-term, will we lose the ability to communicate in the real world?”

Then again, every new technology provokes skepticism. Luckey is unequivocal about where he’d rather inhabit. “The more time you spend in VR, the grayer the real world gets,” he says. “In VR, you don’t have any rules. That’s a pretty cool place to be.”

So would he want to remain there forever? Luckey falls silent, as if he’s toggling back into the future, letting me fade into gray. “If the VR is indistinguishable from real life,” he replies, “yeah, very possibly.”



ing. I hear bullets whizzing by my ears. A good game of old-fashioned Call of Duty can get my heart racing, but inside here it’s different – I can’t escape.

But the thrills come at a price. After I log out and tell Luckey I’m feeling “wavy,” he nods sympathetically. Cybersickness is a real phenomenon caused by the fact that your inner ears don’t feel the motion your eyes are perceiving. Cronin says fixing this is “going to remain a challenge for quite some time.” Luckey admits, “VR isn’t perfect right now.” Despite Luckey’s achievement, Oculus and other VR companies are still working to improve the lag between your movements in the headset and what your eyes see – which will further cut down on the queasy feeling. Plus, Luckey says, the more you jack in, the better you feel. “People who use VR more get acclimated a lot easier,” he says.

So what’s to keep Oculus from going the way of Google Glass? One possibility that no one here wants to talk about: porn. There’s a long track record of adult entertainment fueling demand for new tech-



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R.I.P. GOP

Donald Trump crushed 16 GOP opponents in one of the most appalling, vicious campaigns in history. His next victim? The entire Republican Party

★ By Matt Taibbi ★

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA, MAY 3rd, 2016, a little before 8:30 p.m. Texas Sen. Ted Cruz strode onstage beneath a gorgeous stained-glass relief in the city's Union Station. The hall was doubling as a swanky bar for an upscale local hotel, and much of the assembled press was both lubricated and impatient. The primary had been called for Donald Trump more than an hour before. What was the holdup?

"God bless the Hoosier State!" Cruz said to whoops and cheers after he finally emerged. He was surrounded by a phalanx of American flags, family members and his gimmick running mate of six and a half days, Carly Fiorina, who stared out at the crowd with her trademark alien-abducted smile.

Cruz glanced back and forth across the room with that odd, neckless, monitor-lizard posture of his. He had to know the import of this moment. Nothing less than the future of the Republican Party had been at stake in the Indiana primary.

A Cruz loss effectively meant ceding control of the once-mighty organization to Trump, a seemingly unrepentant non-Republican more likely to read *Penthouse* than the *National Review*.

Before the vote, Cruz put it this way: "We are at the edge of a cliff, staring downward."

Now, Cruz was over that cliff, having been trounced 53 to 36 percent in his last-gasp effort to keep Trump from the nomination. In a detail the film-buff candidate Cruz would appreciate, he left Indiana with the same number of delegates as future senator John Blunt's grade-point average in *Animal House*: zero-point-zero.

Still, Cruz looked like he was ready for the "Was it over when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor?" speech. He was going to fight.

"Will we hold fast to our founding values of rewarding talent, hard work and indus-

try?" he asked. "Or will we continue on that path of creeping socialism that incentivizes apathy and dependency?"

The crowd roared.

"Will we keep America safe from the threats of nuclear war and atomic terrorism?" he thundered. "Or will we pass on to future generations a land devastated and destroyed by the enemies of civilization?"

More raucous cheers.

Cruz smiled. If he has a good quality, it is that he's not easily deterred by criticism. As he took the stage that night, he surely knew that former Speaker of the House John Boehner had recently called him "Lucifer in the flesh," and that fellow senator Lindsey Graham had said, "If you kill Ted Cruz on the floor of the Senate, and the trial was in the Senate, nobody could convict you." Likewise, when it was revealed Cruz once stated that one has no inherent right to "stimulate one's genitals," his college roommate Craig Mazin popped up to call him a hypocrite who'd whacked it plenty in college.

During the campaign, surprising numbers of Americans were even willing to believe Cruz might also be the Zodiac Killer. The infamous Bay Area murders began two years before Cruz was born, but 38 percent of Floridians at one point believed Cruz either was or might be the Zodiac.

Were they serious? In an age when Donald Trump is a presidential nominee, what does "serious" even mean? In any case, the cybercomics who fanned the flames of the Cruz-Zodiac meme will someday be first-ballot entrants in the Trolling Hall of Fame.

Finally, on the morning of the Indiana primary, Cruz woke up to hear opponent Trump babbling that Cruz's own father had been hanging out with Lee Harvey Oswald before the assassination of John F. Kennedy, a bizarre take on a ridiculous *National Enquirer* story that Trump, of course, believed instantly. Trump brought this up on

Fox and Friends, which let him run the ball all the way to the end zone. "I mean, what was he doing with Lee Harvey Oswald, shortly before the death – before the shooting?" Trump asked. "It's horrible."

American politics had never seen anything like this: a presidential candidate derided as a haggardly masturbating incarnation of Satan, the son of a presidential assassin's accomplice, and himself an infamous uncaptured serial killer.

Despite the media humiliations, Cruz talked passionately of his supporters' resolve. "Just a few days ago, two young kids, ages four and six, handed me two envelopes full of change," he said. "All of their earnings from their lemonade stand. They wanted the campaign to have it."

The crowd cooed: *Awwwww!* There was no way he could quit now and let those kids down. Except that moments later, Cruz did just that, announcing he was suspending his campaign because "the path to victory has been foreclosed." Then he fled the stage like he was double-parked.

The air vanished from the ballroom. Cruz supporters went nuts.

Nooooo! they screamed, hugging each other and crying. Many volunteers were from faraway states. They expected to be continuing on somewhere the next morning. Now they were all basically fired.

"What the fuck do we do now?" whispered one.

The pundits present were less emotional. "Does he get to use the lemonade money to pay campaign debts?" wondered one.

As ignominious an end as this was for Cruz, it was a million times worse for the Republican establishment.

The party of Nixon, Reagan and two Bushes had needed a win by Cruz, a man not just disliked but loathed by the party elite, to stave off a takeover by Trump.

And yet Cruz's main pitch to his voters had been that between himself and Trump,



he was the one less connected to the Republican Party. “Cruz is the true outsider,” was how one supporter put it in Indiana.

Cruz volunteer Dan Porter seemed stunned with grief after the results came in, but his sadness was reserved for Cruz, not the Republican Party. He couldn’t seem to wrap his head around the fact that so many people had voted for Trump, a man who’d “been a Democrat his whole life,” while a dedicated constitutionalist like Cruz had been so roundly rejected.

So lost in thought that he stared at the carpet as he spoke, he gave just an incidental shake of the head when asked what the future of the GOP would be now. It was as if the question wasn’t even that important.

“Oh, there won’t be a Republican Party,” he said. “It’s basically over.”

Cruz had at least won nearly 600 delegates and had passionate supporters shedding real tears for him at the end. But nobody anywhere was crying for the Re-

publican Party. Even Custer had a less-lonely last stand.

TRUMP, MEANWHILE, SPENT THE night basking in voluble self-admiration from Trump Tower in New York. This is becoming his victory ritual. The lectern from which he spoke said it all: TRUMP – VICTORY IN INDIANA – NEW YORK CITY.

Trump’s naked disdain for the less-glamorous American flyover provinces he somehow keeps winning by massive margins continued to be one of the livelier comic subplots of the campaign.

From seemingly wondering if Iowans had eaten too much genetically modified corn to thanking the “poorly educated” after his Nevada win, Trump increasingly doesn’t bother to even pretend to pander. This, too, is a major departure for the Republican Party, whose Beltway imageers for decades made pretending to sincerely

prefer barns and trailers to nightclubs and spokesmodels a central part of their electoral strategy.

Not Trump. Hell, he went out of his way to brag about being pals with Tom Brady in the week before the Indiana primary, and still won by almost 20 points. Given the level of Colts-Patriots antipathy, this is a little like campaigning in Louisiana wearing a BP hat, or doing a whistle-stop tour through Waco with Janet Reno.

After his crushing win, Trump gave a breathless victory speech. It was classic Trump. “The people of Indiana have been incredible,” he said. “I campaigned and I made lots of speeches and met lots of incredible people... You don’t get better. The crowds got bigger and bigger... I didn’t want to leave... We had a tremendous victory tonight... Boy, Bobby Knight was incredible.”

He had a few choice words for the GOP leadership. “I want to thank and congrat-

ulate the Republican National Committee, and Reince Priebus,” he croaked, as his heavily-made-up, Robert Palmer-chicks collection of wives and daughters twisted faintly in a deadpan chorus behind him.

“It is not an easy job, when you have 17 egos,” Trump went on, smiling. “And now I guess he’s down to one.”

The crowd roared. The RNC had kissed Trump’s ring. That was it, right there, the death of the modern Republican Party.

After 9/11, it felt like the Republicans would reign in America for a thousand years. Only a year ago, this was still a party that appeared to be on the rise nationally, having gained 13 Senate seats, 69 House seats, 11 governorships and 913 state legislative seats during the Obama presidency.

From there, this Republican Party would steam toward the White House, which, who knows, it might even win.

The other Republican Party was revealed in the end to be a surprisingly small collection of uptight lawyers, financiers and Beltway intellectuals who’d just seen their chosen candidate, the \$100 million Jeb Bush, muster all of four delegates in the presidential race. Meanwhile, candidates whose talking points involved the beheading of this same party establishment were likely to win around 2,000.

Like French aristocrats after 1789, those Republicans may now head into something like foreign exile to plot their eventual return. But whether they will be guillotined or welcomed back is an open question.

Their expected endgame here was probably supposed to be the ascension of some far-right, anti-tax, anti-government radical like Scott Walker, or even Cruz.

Instead, this carefully cultivated “throw the bums out” vibe was gluttonously appropriated by Trump, who turned the anger against the entire Republican Party before surging to victory on a strongman’s platform of giant walls, mass deportation and extravagant job promises that made the moon landing or the Bernie Sanders agenda of free college look incrementalist in comparison.

One could say this was just a calamitous strategic misread on the part of the Koch brothers types. But another way to look at it is that this was the inevitable conse-

“ONLY A YEAR AGO, THE GOP APPEARED TO BE ON THE RISE. NOW THE PARTY IS EFFECTIVELY DEAD AS A POLITICAL FORCE, DOOMED TO GO THE WAY OF THE WHIGS.”

Now the party was effectively dead as a modern political force, doomed to go the way of the Whigs or the Free-Soilers.

After Indiana, a historic chasm opened in the ranks of the party. The two former President Bushes, along with Mitt Romney, announced they wouldn’t attend Trump’s coronation at the convention in Cleveland. Additionally, House Speaker Paul Ryan refused to say he would support the nominee.

There were now two Republican Parties. One, led by Trump, was triumphant at the ballot, rapidly accruing party converts, and headed to Cleveland for what, knowing the candidate, was sure to be the *yuugest*, most obscene, most joyfully tacky tribute to a single person ever seen in the television age. If the convention isn’t Lib-erace meets Stalin meets Vince McMahon, it’ll be a massive disappointment.

This was all because they’d misplayed the most unpredictable and certainly most ridiculous presidential-campaign season Americans had ever seen.

On the one hand, they’d been blindsided by Trump, a foulmouthed free-coverage magnet who impulsively decided to make mocking the Republican Party mullahs his pet project for the years 2015-2016.

But they were also undone by a surge of voter anger that was in significant part their own fault. In recent years, the Koch brothers/Tea Party wing of the GOP had purged all moderates from the party, to the point where anyone who was on record supporting the continued existence of any federal agency, said Mexicans were people, or spoke even theoretically about the utility of taxes was drummed from the candidate rolls.

quence of the basic dynamic of the party, which by the end was little more than a collection plate for global business interests that were, if not foreign exactly, certainly nationless.

There was a time in this country – and many voters in places like Indiana and Michigan and Pennsylvania are old enough to remember it – when business leaders felt a patriotic responsibility to protect American jobs and communities. Mitt Romney’s father, George, was such a leader, deeply concerned about the city of Detroit, where he built AMC cars.

But his son Mitt wasn’t. That sense of noblesse oblige disappeared somewhere during the past generation, when the newly global employer class cut regular working stiff’s loose, forcing them to compete with billions of foreigners without

FROM LEFT: VALENTYN VOLKOV/SHUTTERSTOCK; MICHAEL REGAN/GETTY IMAGES; MARK RALSTON/AF/GETTY IMAGES; ROB STOTHARD/GETTY IMAGES; RICH FURY/INVISION/AP IMAGES; LUCASFILM, DIGITALLY ALTERED BY “ROLLING STONE”; ROB CARR/AP IMAGES; © AMY HARRIS/REX SHUTTERSTOCK/ZUMAPRESS.COM; CHIP SOMODELLA/GETTY IMAGES

THREAT ASSESSMENT THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE SCARY



WITH US

Italy: Stealing food not a crime if you're suffering from hunger.

Leicester City FC defies 5,000-to-1 odds, becomes champs.

Feds: North Carolina LGBT bathroom ban violates civil rights law.

London elects mayor who is a **Muslim**.

Young **Han Solo** cast.

Same-sex adoption now legal in all 50 states.

Stones to Trump: Stop playing our tunes.

Best **job market** for new college grads in a decade

FROM LEFT: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"; U.S. NAVY; HIGHLAND PARK DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY, DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"; DONALD RUMP/FACEBOOK; FABIO VILLA/SHUTTERSTOCK, DOORLEAK/SHUTTERSTOCK, DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"; LUSH/SHUTTERSTOCK; DAVEY/HICKS/IMAGES; TYLER HICKS/"THE NEW YORK TIMES"/REDUX

IF THIS ISN'T THE END FOR THE Republican Party, it'll be a shame. They dominated American political life for 50 years and were never anything but monsters. They bred in their voters the incredible attitude that Republicans were the only people within our borders who raised children, loved their country, died in battle or paid taxes. They even sullied the word "American" by insisting they were the only real ones. They preferred Lubbock to Paris, and their idea of an intellectual was Newt Gingrich. Their leaders, from Ralph Reed to Bill Frist to Tom DeLay to Rick Santorum to Romney and Ryan, were an interminable assembly line of shrieking, witch-hunting celibates, all with the same haircut – the kind of people who thought Iran-Contra was nothing, but would grind the affairs of state to a halt over a blow job or Terri Schiavo's feeding tube.

In the weeks surrounding Cruz's cat-fart of a surrender in Indiana, party luminaries began the predictably Soviet process of coalescing around the once-despised new ruler. Trump endorsements of varying degrees of sincerity spilled in from the likes of Dick Cheney, Bob Dole, Mitch McConnell and even John McCain.

That's why the first rule of any revolution is to wipe out the intellectuals. Trump is surely already dreaming of the vast logging camp he will fill with the Republican think-fluencers who are at the moment making a show of being the last holdouts.

Not surprisingly, in the past weeks, there was an epidemic of Monday-morning quarterbacking among the Beltway punditocracy, as GOP cognoscenti struggled to cope with the reality of Trumpism.

There were basically two responses among the tie-and-glasses sect of Republicans to the prospect of kneeling before the philistine Trump: In the minority stood *New York Times* lonely-hearts moralist David Brooks, who took the remarkable step of looking at Trump's victories and wondering what part of this unraveling could be his own fault. In Brooks-ian fashion, this essentially noble response came out as painful pretentious comedy. He concluded that the problem was that upper-crust conservatives like himself hadn't spent enough time getting to know the dirtier folks below decks.

ladder of hope” by leaping across “chasms of segmentation.”

Translated into English, this might have meant anything from trying the occasional domestic beer to actually hanging around the unemployed. But at least Brooks recognized that on some level, the rise of Trump pointed to a connection failure in the Republican kingmaking class.

No others among his conservative brethren saw it that way. Most Republican intellectuals recoiled in blameless horror from the Trumpening, blaming everything from media bias to the educational system for his rise. Some even promised to degrade themselves with a vote for Hillary Clinton before ever supporting Trump.

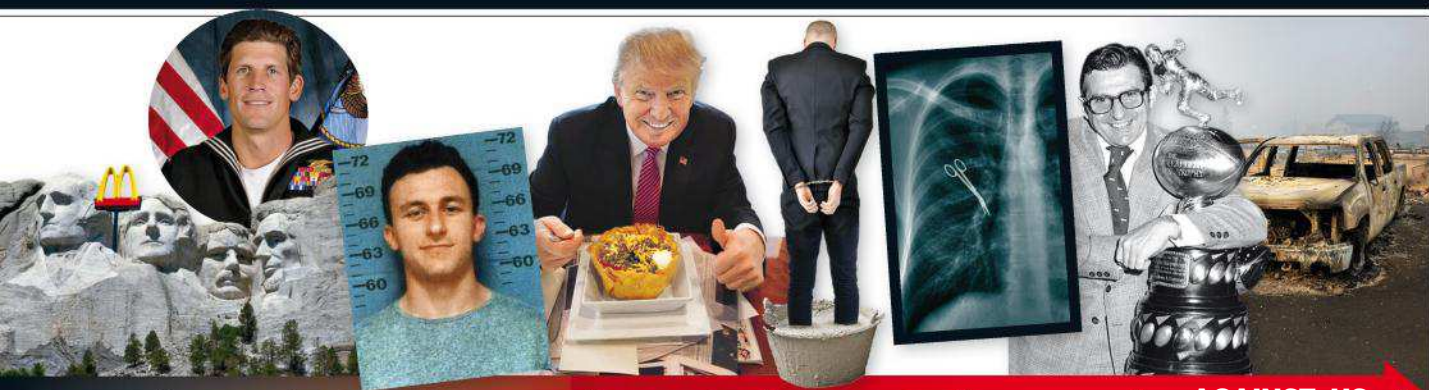
George Will of *The Washington Post* might have been the loudest objector. Will increasingly seems like a man who is sure history will remember him for his heroic opposition to Trump, and not for those 40-plus years of being an insufferable spinster who writes bad columns about baseball to prove his ties to the common man.

His diatribes against Trump, a “coarse character” who reads the *National Enquirer* and brags about the size of his “penis” (one could almost feel the pain it caused Will to have to commit this word to paper), took on an almost religious character.

Just before Indiana, Will began treating the nomination of Trump like a forest fire or a SARS outbreak, something that with the right spirit of sacrifice could be contained with minimal loss of life, and perhaps only four years of a Hillary presidency.

"If Trump is nominated," Will wrote, "Republicans working to purge him and his manner from public life will reap the considerable satisfaction of preserving the identity of their 162-year-old party."

But the crowning effort on the right-wing snobbery front came from none other than British blogging icon and noted hairy person Andrew Sullivan. The aforementioned came out of semiretirement to write



AGAINST US

Canadian wildfire
devastates
Alberta city
of **80,000**.

a 7,000-word jeremiad for *New York* magazine about how Trump was the inevitable product of too much democracy.

The CliffsNotes summary of his monstrous piece, “Democracies End When They Are Too Democratic,” might go something like this: When I read Plato in grad school, I learned that in free societies the mob eventually stops deferring to the wisdom of smart people, and therefore must be muzzled before they send Trump to wash the streets with our blood.

Sullivan’s analysis was a balm to the decades of butt-hurt that await the soon-to-be-ex-elite of the Republican Party. It blamed Trump’s rise on everyone but Republican intellectuals: Obama, Black Lives Matter and even “the gay left, for whom the word ‘magnanimity’ seems unknown.”

“A struggling white man in the heartland is now told to ‘check his privilege’ by students at Ivy League colleges,” Sullivan wrote, in a sentence that would probably be true enough, if those two groups ever interacted. Sullivan was right that white conservatives in places like Indiana hate Ivy Leaguers and Black Lives Matter and the

them to business interests eager to ship their jobs off to China and India. The most successful trick was linking the corporate mantra of profit without responsibility to the concept of individual liberty.

Into the heartland were sent wave after wave of politicians, each more strident and freedom-y than the last. They arrived draped in the flag, spewed patriotic bromides about God, guns and small-town values, and pledged to give the liberals hell and bring the pride back.

Then they went off to Washington and year after year did absolutely squat for their constituents. They were excellent at securing corporate tax holidays and tax cuts for the rich, but they almost never returned to voter country with jobs in hand. Instead, they brought an ever-increasing list of villains responsible for the lack of work: communists, bra-burning feminists, black “race hustlers,” climate-change activists, Muslims, Hollywood, horned owls...

By the Tea Party era, their candidates were forced to point fingers at their own political establishment for votes, since after so many years of bitter economic decline,

10 percent flat tax and a 16 percent consumption tax. Not because the rich would pay less and the poor would pay more, but because America and fairness, etc. He was just getting to his beloved money line, claiming, “We can fill out our taxes on a postcard,” when a 12-year-old boy interrupted with cries of “You suck!” and “I don’t care!”

Cruz couldn’t quite handle the pressure and stepped straight into the man-trap the moment presented. He lectured the kid about respecting his elders, then suggested the world might be a better place if someone had taught a young Donald Trump that lesson. It was a not-half-bad line of the type that the Harvard lawyer is occasionally capable. But Cruz couldn’t help himself and added, “You know, in my household, when a child behaves that way, they get a spanking.”

Boom! Within hours the Internet was filled with headlines about how Ted Cruz had suggested spanking someone else’s 12-year-old for telling him he sucked.

This was on top of the ignominy of having already called a basketball hoop a “ring”

“TRUMP’S REPUBLICAN CONVENTION WILL BE THE MOST OBSCENE, TACKY TRIBUTE TO A PERSON IN TV HISTORY: LIBERACE MEETS STALIN MEETS VINCE MCMAHON.”

gay left and safe-spacers and feminists and all the other mocking, sneering, atheistic know-it-all types from cosmopolitan cities who scoff, as Obama famously did once, at their guns and their religion.

But they also hated all of those people eight years ago, 16 years ago, 30 years ago. What’s new about the Year of Trump is that they have now also suddenly turned on their own party. Why?

Sullivan basically ignored this question. The closest he came to an explanation was a passage saying that “global economic forces” hurt blue-collar workers in particular, forcing them to compete with lots of other unskilled and basically fungible human beings around the world. Which made them, he guessed, pissed off.

This avalanche of verbose disgust on the part of conservative intellectuals toward the Trump voter, who until very recently was the Republican voter, tells us everything we need to know about what actually happened in 2016.

There never was any real connection between the George Wills, Andrew Sullivans and David Brooks and the gun-toting, Jesus-loving ex-middle-class voters they claimed to embrace. All those intellectuals ever did for Middle America was cook up a sales pitch designed to get them to vote for politicians who would instantly betray

that was the only story they could still believably sell.

This led to the hilarious irony of Ted Cruz. Here was a quintessentially insipid GOP con man culled straight from the halls of Princeton, Harvard, the Supreme Court, the Federal Trade Commission and the National Republican Senatorial Committee to smooth-talk the yokels. But through a freak accident of history, he came along just when the newest models of his type were selling “the Republican establishment sucks” as an electoral strategy.

Cruz was like an android that should have self-destructed in a cloud of sparks and black smoke the moment the switch flipped on. He instead stayed on just long enough to win 564 delegates, a stunning testament to just how much Republican voters, in the end, hated the Republican kingmakers Cruz robotically denounced.

All of these crazy contradictions came to a head in Indiana, where Cruz succumbed in an explosion of hate and scorn. The cascade started the Sunday night before the primary, with a Cruz stump speech in La Porte that couldn’t have gone worse.

Things went sideways as Cruz was working his way into a “simple flat tax” spiel, a standard Republican snake-oil proposal in which all corporate, estate and gift taxes would be eliminated, and replaced with a

while giving a speech on the gym floor in Knightstown, the home of the fictional Hickory team from *Hoosiers*. No American male would call a basketball hoop a ring, and even a French immigrant would know better than to do so in Indiana, but this was the kind of run he was on.

The rest of the race was a slapstick blow-out. Carly Fiorina fell off a stage, and Cruz’s wife, Heidi, actually had to answer a question from a Yahoo! reporter about her husband being called the Zodiac Killer. Heidi Cruz calmly responded that she’d been married to Ted for 15 years and “I know pretty well who he is.” This, of course, was exactly what the wife of the actual Zodiac Killer would say, making for a perfectly absurd ending to a doomed campaign.

AS ANYONE WHO’S EVER BEEN TO high school knows, there’s no answer to “You suck!” When a bully pulls that line on you, it’s because he can smell the weakness: the Jonas Brothers album in your closet, your good grades, your mantleful of band-camp participation trophies, whatever. When the mob smells unorthodoxy, there’s no talking your way out of it. You just have to hold on for dear life.

Trump has turned the new Republican Party into high school. It will be cruel,



THE NEW LEADER Trump declares victory in Indiana from Manhattan. He has since pivoted to the general election, and started his run as a “respectable” candidate by tweeting about “crooked Hillary.”

clique-y and ruled by insult kings like himself and Ann Coulter, whose headline description of Cruz (“Tracy Flick With a Dick”) will always resonate with Trump voters more than a thousand George Will columns.

And anyone who crosses the leader from now on will be fair game for the kind of brutal fragging Cruz and his circle experienced in Indiana. Dissenters will be buried under a cannonade of abuse coming from everywhere: Trump, other politicians, reporters, Internet memers, 12-year-olds, everyone. Add tough economic times to the Internet, and this is what you get: Nationalist High.

Indiana was the end of an era. As Fiorina moved through a pancake house on primary morning, her supporters meekly bowed and curtsied as though she were the Queen Mother, calling her ma’am and showing off the small-town civility and churchy hospitality that was once a defining characteristic of Republican campaign-trail events. In the Trump era, this seems likely to be replaced forever by the testosterone-fueled diss-fests that had undone Cruz in this state.

“People don’t care about civility anymore,” said Cruz supporter Julie Reimann with a sigh. “It’s another sad state of affairs, and when you see it across the Midwest and in our small towns, it’s like, ‘What has happened to us? Why are we so mean?’”

The real question might be, “Why weren’t we meaner before?”

Politics at its most basic isn’t a Princeton debating society. It’s a desperate battle over who gets what. But during the past

50 years, when there was a vast shift in the distribution of wealth in this country, when tens of millions of people were put out of good, dignified jobs and into humiliating ones, America’s elections remained weirdly civil, Queensberry-rules reality shows full of stilted TV debates over issues like abortion, gay marriage and the estate tax.

As any journalist who’s ever covered a miners’ strike or a foreclosure court will report, things get physically tense when people are forced to fight for their economic lives. Yet Trump’s campaign has been the first to unleash that menacing feel during a modern presidential race.

Some, or maybe a lot of it, is racial resentment. But much of it has to be long-delayed anger over the way things have been divvied up over the years. The significance of Trump’s wall idea, apart from its bluntly racist appeal as a barrier to non-white people, is that it redefines the world in terms of a clear Us and Them, with politicians directly responsible for Us.

It’s a plain rebuttal to the Sullivan explanation for why nobody between the coasts has a decent job anymore, i.e., that there are “global economic forces” at work that we can no more change than we can the weather. Trump’s solutions are preposterous, logistically impossible and ideologically vicious, but he’s giving people a promise more concrete than “tax cuts will stimulate growth that will eventually bring jobs back.” He’s peddling hope, and with hope comes anger.

Of course, Trump is more likely than not to crash the car now that he has the wheel. News reports surfaced that Donald

Trump, unhinged pig, was about to be replaced by Donald Trump, respectable presidential candidate. No more schoolyard insults!

Trump went along with this plan for a few days. But soon after Indiana, he started public fights with old pal Joe Scarborough and former opponents Graham and Bush, the latter for backtracking on a reported pledge to support the Republican nominee. “Bush signed a pledge... while signing it, he fell asleep,” Trump cracked.

Then he began his general-election pivot with about 10 million tweets directed at “crooked Hillary.” With all this, Trump emphasized that the GOP was now mainly defined by whatever was going through his head at any given moment. The “new GOP” seems doomed to swing back and forth between its nationalist message and its leader’s tubercular psyche. It isn’t a party, it’s a mood.

Democrats who might be tempted to gloat over all of this should check themselves. If the

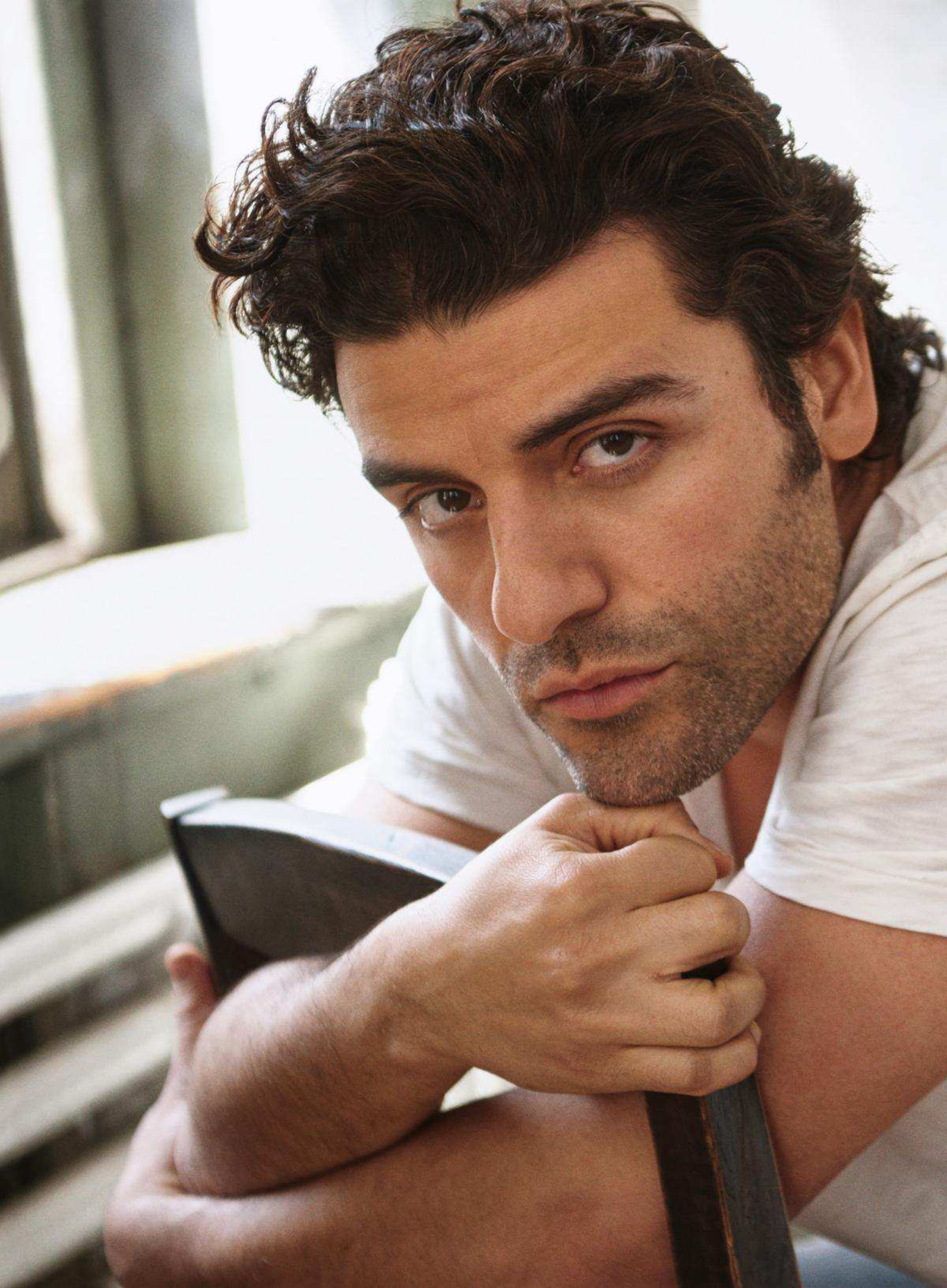
Hillary Clintons and Harry Reids and Gene Sperlings of the world don’t look at what just happened to the Republicans as a terrible object lesson in the perils of prioritizing billionaire funders over voters, then they too will soon enough be tossed in the trash like a tick.


It almost happened this year, when the supporters of Bernie Sanders nearly made it over the wall. Totally different politicians with completely different ideas about civility and democracy, Sanders and Trump nonetheless keyed in on the same widespread disgust over the greed and cynicism of the American political class.

From the Walter Mondale years on, Democrats have eaten from the same trough as Republicans. They’ve grown fat off cash from behemoths like Cisco, Pfizer, Exxon Mobil, Citigroup, Goldman and countless others, companies that moved jobs overseas, offshored profits, helped finance the construction of factories in rival states like China and India, and sometimes all of the above.

The basic critique of both the Trump and Sanders campaigns is that you can’t continually take that money and also be on the side of working people. Money is important in politics, but in democracy, people ultimately still count more.

The Democrats survived this time, but Republicans allowed their voters to see the numerical weakness of our major parties. It should take an awful lot to break up 60 million unified people. But a few hundred lawyers, a pile of money and a sales pitch can be replaced in a heartbeat, even by someone as dumb as Donald Trump. **2**





Oscar Isaac's *X* Factor

From ska punk
to 'Star Wars' and
'X-Men' – the wild
rise of a leading man

By BRIAN HIATT

Oscar Isaac shuts his eyes tight, guitar in hand, and the world goes away. Which is convenient, because the world keeps presenting him with unwelcome facts, here in his 37th year: Turns out that if you're a dreamily handsome actor who delivers fierce, incandescent, once-in-a-generation performances worthy of Pacino and De Niro, and then takes big roles in *Star Wars* and *X-Men* movies, you will become famous, and people will start calling you a movie star. Who knew? "I'm an actor, not a *star*," he'll say, bristling politely, if probed too hard on the subject of his rise. "I don't really know what you mean when you say 'star,' 'movie star,' that stuff." ♦ Isaac never planned for any of this – never

Photograph by MARK SELIGER

planned for much of anything, really – and he's trying to keep it all out of his head. He's obsessed with craft, indifferent to celebrity, private by instinct. The money is nice, not that he's spending much of it, but the only part of success he truly covets is having his pick of roles. He's bemused by the fervent female fan base he's acquired, with bloggers calling him "the Internet's boyfriend." "The Internet never struck me as being into monogamous relationships," he says with a small laugh. "It's very promiscuous, the Internet." (The Internet almost dumped him last year when an old picture emerged of him wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the cover of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*. "I liked the design," he says. "I didn't think wearing the shirt was saying I agreed with all her politics. I'm not a libertarian!")

Isaac still lives in the same one-bedroom apartment in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, he bought before his career's recent uptick. He doesn't own a car ("You know how much a garage is? It's like paying rent!"). He did at least renovate his Brooklyn place, and purchased homes for his mom and sister. He'll consider a larger apartment if he has kids, or, as he puts it, "if I duplicate or replicate."

He doesn't want his life to change, and certainly doesn't want to be trapped in dull leading-man parts. He was unnerved when the director Paul Schrader told him, of one prospective role, "You're going to be the lead, you're going to have to show up and let day players twirl around you, doing all sorts of interesting stuff, and you've just got to listen and be present." *That's not what De Niro did in 'Taxi Driver,'* he thought.

Now, on a Thursday afternoon in April, during a rare sojourn home from the London shoot of the follow-up to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, Isaac is doing exactly what he'd be doing if none of his success had happened: jamming with friends in a Brooklyn rehearsal space not far from his apartment. "We're just fooling around," he claims, but he's blissed out, transported, as he plays. He's wearing a thin white T-shirt, loose at the neck, which, combined with his rosy physique, dark good looks, and the sideburns he's grown for his *Star Wars* part as Poe Dameron, gives him a distinct Springsteen-in-'78 vibe. (He doesn't deny that he'd be good casting for a Bruce bio-

pic, but adds, "Wouldn't you rather just see Springsteen for real?")

When Isaac enrolled in Juilliard in 2001, he left behind a promising, if already deeply out-of-fashion, Florida ska-punk band. He hadn't decided between music and acting: His talents for the former were key to winning the most important role of his career, as an amusingly dolorous Sixties folk singer in the Coen brothers' *Inside Llewyn Davis*, which took him, at age 35, from eternally promising second-stringer to one of the most in-demand actors in the world. (His essential lessons from the Coens: the unimportance of careerism and the virtues of "just getting on with it.")

Isaac strums a D chord on an acoustic guitar, eyes still shut, losing himself in "Devotion," a song he wrote six months ago. He was, at the time, in Montreal, filming his *X-Men: Apocalypse* role as nearly all-powerful mutant Apocalypse, a performance that director Bryan Singer calibrated by asking for "quarter Skeletor," "half Skeletor" or "full Skeletor." Needless to say, "You can fire your arrows from the Tower of Babel, but you can never strike God!" called for full Skeletor.

Every day, Isaac wore blue makeup, prosthetics, Kiss-worthy high-heeled boots to push him from five feet nine to more than six feet, and a 40-pound suit. ("It was a nightmare contraption," says *X-Men* producer Simon Kinberg, "and he never complained.") In order to stay conscious on humid outdoor shoots,

Isaac had to visit a cooling tent between each scene. "I would do some acting," he says, "and then go to my tent and try to breathe and not freak out that sweat was pouring into my ears and I couldn't touch them. It was rough. But the challenge of basically doing Kabuki theater in a film was crazy." At one point, Isaac and Michael Fassbender, who plays Magneto, walked back to their trailers together, and took a moment to assess the oddity of their jobs. "He was dressed up in blue and I had my cape and helmet on," says Fassbender. "Two grown men. We had a little chuckle." The pair had already bonded at a late-night dinner early in the shoot, arriving on set the next morning with twin hangovers.

"Devotion" fails to reflect the circumstances of its composition, though it does sound like something you'd write while missing your girlfriend. The melody is

strong, with a Jeff Buckley-like feel. "I have released myself from fear," Isaac sings in the chorus, in his supple, sweet-toned voice, stretching out the pronoun. "But I go crazy when you're not here."

It is, pretty clearly, a love song: "Anything worth doing is worth doing in bed," he growls in the verse. "The life that I see is a life I'm ready to begin/It took me a while, but now I welcome you in.... With a word, I'll put my devotion to the test/I'll strap your love around me like a suicide vest." In the bridge, he murmurs something about having a baby – maybe he's seriously considering replication and/or duplication.

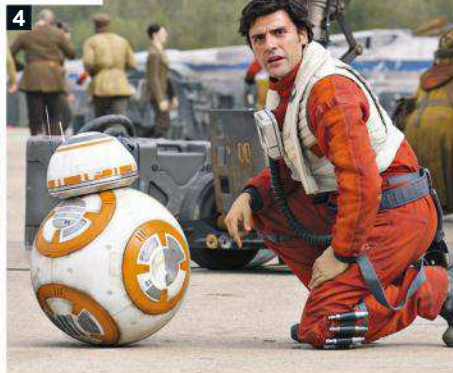
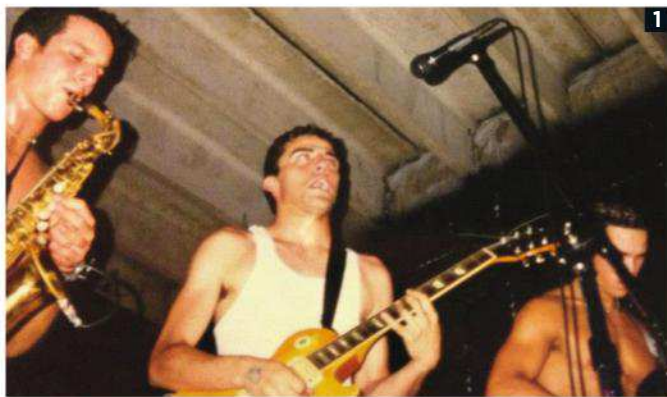
These lyrics are as open as Isaac will ever get about his romantic life, which he guards in a manner that's as much a throwback as the Seventies intensity of his screen presence. By all accounts except his own, he does have a girlfriend: a blond documentary filmmaker named Elvira Lind who's a quarter-head taller than him. Signs of her are everywhere – he is, for example, wearing a blue baseball cap with the letters NV on the front, a nod to the hip Nord Vest neighborhood in Lind's native Copenhagen.

On a corner couch, Isaac's childhood friend and longtime musical collaborator Bruce Ferguson is following his chord changes on electric guitar. He and Isaac are an amusingly incongruous pair: lanky and bespectacled, with a scraggly beard, Ferguson looks like the astrophysics Ph.D. candidate he once was (he's now a private tutor for Manhattan kids). In their own school days in Florida, the pair collected *X-Men* comics together, even played a Marvel role-playing game, so Isaac had his friend help him formulate ideas about playing Apocalypse – a part he embraced out of pure fandom. "I was really into the character," Isaac says. "I'm not a huge comic-book-movie fan. I like them and I appreciate them, but it's started to feel a little bit repetitive. I did really like *Deadpool*, and the last *X-Men*."

The studio space belongs to a musician named Rene Lopez, a friend of more recent vintage. Lopez, who was once in a band with former members of Blind Melon and Spacehog, met Isaac three years ago when the actor showed up at a popular open mic Lopez ran. "I didn't know he was an actor," Lopez recalls. "I had seen him in movies before, but I didn't put it together. When he came onstage, I didn't think of him as anything but a musician, because he's as good as anyone doing it for real."

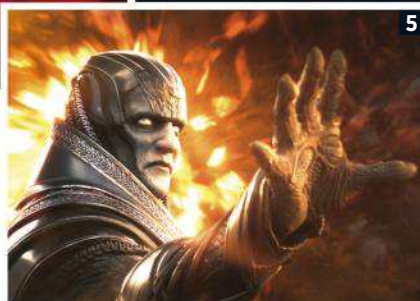
Without a character to hide behind, Isaac is prone to stage fright when he plays music to an audience. But in private, he's positively hammy. A mention of Kendrick Lamar leads him into a medley of "Girl From the North Country" and Lamar's "Money Trees," with its "Halle Berry or hallelujah" refrain. "I been hustling all day," Isaac sings. "This-a-way, that-a-way."

**"I was like,
'This is a
bong?'**
**Is that what
they call
this? Give it
over here.**
**Oh, this is
nice. Wow.**
**I should have
been doing
this a long
time ago!"**



Star Man

- (1) Isaac's pre-fame ska band. (2) As a boy, he was expelled from school.
- (3) Preparing for a show at Juilliard. (4) He was a fan favorite in *The Force Awakens*.
- (5) For *Apocalypse* in the new *X-Men* movie, his director asked him to go "full Skeletor."



IN THE CURRENT LEADING-MAN SEA of buff, WASP-y dudes named Ryan and Chris, Isaac stands out. He's good-looking in a slightly imperfect manner that harkens back to a pre-Ken-doll era of moviemaking: His nose is prominent, with a small dent at the tip. ("A butt nose," he says with pride. "I have a schnozz.") "He has an interesting face," says Singer. "Like the great movie stars, like Harrison Ford, like Tom Cruise." One reason Singer wanted Isaac for the ancient menace of *Apocalypse* is "the global architecture of his face. There's something about Oscar that could be Egyptian, Asiatic, Latino or Caucasian. His facial structure embodies a global human."

Isaac's father is Cuban; his mother is Guatemalan. His father left Cuba for the U.S. right before the revolution, then at-

actor, we'll just bring him in for Spanish commercials," Isaac says. "I'm interested in telling stories about the human experience that are not necessarily just about my personal circumstances. So how do I navigate that? I feel like I've been able to."

At the same time, Isaac wants to embrace his identity, and he knows there are people in the U.S. and Guatemala who "want me to kind of carry the torch." The rise of Donald Trump is "definitely irritating. The problem is it's less about the guy

that's saying it, and more that he's being the mouthpiece for a large part of the population. Because that's *me*, that's *my family*. We're immigrants. What could be positive about it is that Trump could help to rally a lot of disparate parts of Latin America together. Because Latino is not a race – it's a culture. There's Chinese Latinos, there's very white Latinos, there's very dark Latinos, there's black Latinos. There's all sorts of variants – it's not one thing."

As Isaac's dad completed his medical training, the family moved from Baltimore to New Orleans, then settled down in Miami when Oscar was six. In kindergarten in Louisiana, he somehow went around believing that his family came from the Soviet Union. "I don't know where I came up with that," he says. "I'd tell all the kids I was Russian and we'd play war."

He started getting in trouble as early as first grade, when his class-clownish urge to perform led a teacher to put up a barricade around his desk to prevent him from distracting the class. He turned it into a venue for puppet shows. Soon, he started learning guitar and making ever-more-elaborate home movies with his father's camera. (In high school, he began writing an invitation to Claire Danes, then the teen star of *My So-Called Life*, to appear in one of his productions, but he reconsidered.)

His parents were fervent evangelical Christians; Isaac systematically questioned and then abandoned the faith. "The social-conservative culture wasn't lining up with what I was understanding Jesus was saying," he says. His father enjoyed engaging in debate on these points: "He would argue all the time," Isaac says. "It's part of being Cuban – there was joy in argument. My friends would come over, oh, my God. At one point we all would be yelling at each other and then pretend nothing happened. I'm sure in some ways it wasn't healthy."

Things got turbulent around middle school. His parents divorced when he was at "prime trauma age"; [Cont. on 60]

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The Next Wave

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10 New Artists
Defining the
Sound of Now

Car Seat Headrest

A suburban shut-in turns anxiety into garage gold

Will Toledo is garage rock's most promising young songwriter, but for years music was something he did by himself. He started out recording alone, in bedrooms, dorm rooms and – now somewhat famously – the family Subaru, parking after school with his guitar and laptop outside big-box stores around his hometown of Leesburg, Virginia. He wrote couplets about avoiding the sun, about reading the Book of Job empathetically, about watching too much TV. When he settled on the name Car Seat Headrest, it was in tribute to his mobile confessional booth. Since then, the 23-year-old Toledo has had a dozen-odd releases. But 2016 is sure to be his biggest year: In May, having signed to the indie powerhouse label Matador, he'll release the exhilarating *Teens of Denial*, his first LP, made in a studio with [Cont. on 42]

GUIDED BY VOICES Will Toledo in his Kirkland, Washington, bedroom

IAN ALLEN

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CAR SEAT HEADREST

[Cont. from 41] a producer, and one of the year's best rock albums. The anxiously punchy music combines the melodic charge of anthemic Sixties rock (Toledo is a big Beatles fan) with the low-fi grind of Nineties bands like Guided by Voices. "I spend a lot of time analyzing myself," Toledo says. "I'm not in therapy – except I am, constantly, in my own mind, asking why I am the way I am." The result is a potent paradox: swaggering singalongs, made by a deeply anti-social dude.

When we meet, Toledo is driving an old Toyota Sienna minivan through the unglamorous Seattle suburb of Kirkland, where he's lived since college. He's fresh off a national tour, and Europe is next, but tomorrow night he's booked at a local house show, so he's heading into town to practice with his bandmates. "Kirkland is a pretty unhip place," he says – it's best known as the namesake home of Costco's house brand – but it suits him. "I don't like cities," he says. Toledo says he was bored in suburban Virginia, but "rather than flee to a city to find a creative community, I went online and found a community there."

One of Car Seat Headrest's big themes is miscommunication. "It's a recurring fear of mine," Toledo says. "'Are my mental operations normal, and can I communicate in a normal way to people?'" As a little kid, he says, he was "not that talkative, and would just watch TV and daydream, in my own world." On one *Teens of Denial* track, "Drugs With Friends," he recounts a college-era acid trip gone wrong: "I did half a tab plus some mushrooms, and when the visual part of the trip kicked in, I tried to explain what I was seeing to my friend, but then I thought, 'How can I possibly explain it?' So I decided instead that I just wouldn't talk for six hours, trying not to freak out."

Between Kirkland and Seattle we pick up Ethan Ives, 22, who plays bass and guitar in Toledo's band. Toledo met him while playing at an all-ages show out here a couple of years ago. Ives has braces and wears a T-shirt emblazoned with cover art from the 1993 video game Doom. At a burrito spot near the Car Seat Headrest rehearsal space, in Capitol Hill, we meet drummer Andrew Katz, whom Toledo enlisted on Craigslist. The three have the warm but slightly stilted rapport of workplace buddies, but when they get to their practice space, they're in sync, bashing out a tremendous noise. Toledo stands weirdly still at his mic stand, then starts to sway his hips, eyes closed – lost, happily, in a private moment. His shaky contentment reminds me of something he told me earlier: "I'm one of those people who struggles sometimes because the world isn't custom-designed to my needs – but that's everyone, right?"

JONAH WEINER



Danish soul:
Lukas Graham's
Kasper Daugaard,
Mark Falgren,
Forchhammer and
Magnus Larsson
(from left)

HEAR
THIS *by*
Elton
John



ROSIE
LOWE

"I played 'Woman,' by a new U.K. artist, Rosie Lowe, on my *Beats 1 Rocket Hour* show earlier this year. I love Rosie's vocals. She has a hypnotic delivery, and she reminds me of James Blake in the way she conveys mystery and beauty. Off the back of that play, Rosie got in touch with my music management company, and now we're helping her with her career."

Lukas Graham

"I KNEW HOW TO MIX A MOLOTOV COCKTAIL BEFORE I KNEW how to mix a Long Island iced tea," says Lukas Forchhammer. The Danish singer-songwriter grew up in Copenhagen's Christiania neighborhood, an autonomous commune founded by anarchist squatters, and routinely battled local police. "We threw rocks at them," he says. "We used nails to make sure that their trucks' tires were punctured. We did all sorts of crazy shit because we were so angry, and there was no place to vent that anger." But instead of forming a leftist punk band, Forchhammer (who found his singing voice in the Copenhagen Boys Choir) ended up pursuing more-soothing soulful sounds. In 2010, he found a new outlet for his frustrations: a band, which he named Lukas Graham. Much of their self-titled debut is an upbeat mix of rock and soul, but the ballad "7 Years," a Number One hit this year, recounts Forchhammer's tough upbringing. "When I go back home, I meet my friends who are still dealing drugs and visit my friends who are in jail," says Forchhammer, who now splits his time between Copenhagen and Los Angeles. "They're all so proud of me."

**A chart-topping
Danish singer
with a radical
background**

KORY GROW

BOTTOM: MICHAEL KOVAC/GETTY IMAGES

"Have you heard I'm so young/And who my parents are?" Kline in Brooklyn.



Frankie Cosmos An indie-pop prodigy takes off

Greta Kline wants to meet at her high school hangout, the local diner where she and friends would loiter for a bit too long after class let out. At Eli's Market on New York's Upper West Side, the macaroni-and-cheese costs so much per pound it may

as well be made of gold, and fussy toddlers crumble cookies into the laps of unruffled nannies. "Everyone came here after, like, *prom*," says Kline, 22, slinking into her seat. She pulls the sleeves of her oversize vintage varsity jacket over her hands and seems

to want to hide even in plain sight. "I was really shy as a kid," she says by way of explanation. "I'm still really scared of being seen. I don't like my face on display."

Shyness hasn't kept Kline from becoming one of indie rock's best young songwrit-

ers. Offstage, she is an NYU student on hiatus, native Manhattanite and onetime child actor, the daughter of actors Kevin Kline and Phoebe Cates. (You may remember her warbling Mr. Mister's "Kyrie" in *The Squid and the Whale*.) Onstage, she is [Cont. on 44]

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Giovanni James

Futurist soul from a former magician and dancer

"I like casting spells," James says. "Nina Simone, Led Zep-pelin, Nirvana, Michael Jackson, Prince – people who are really powerful, they cast spells." On his debut EP, *Whutcha Want*, the Harlem singer-songwriter lives up to that bravado with a futuristic blend of gutbucket soul and modern groove, recalling Elvis as much as Frank Ocean. James grew up in Albany, New York, the son of a prostitute. He learned to DJ by age 10, and by 17 he'd moved to New York City, where he started a performance group, the Harlem James Gang, that mixed singing, dancing and magic. The crew's gigs included private shows for Madonna. But James eventually turned his focus to recording. "I like to meld the past with the future," he says. "I'm trying to take moments that were classic and good for the human soul and let you know we're alive." **JOE LEVY**

Put a spell on you: James recalls Elvis and Frank Ocean.

FRANKIE COSMOS

[Cont. from 43] Frankie Cosmos, singer of introspective odes to swelling emotions. At times on *Next Thing*, her new LP, Kline sounds like the millennial heir to Liz Phair's sardonic bedroom-tape sound. Her songs are tiny koans about growing up brainy, sensitive and introverted in the big city; they take the confusing "what the fuck?" moments of being young and alive and infuse them with lightness, juxtaposing heartbreak with goofy punk riffs, alienation with sunny, fuzzed-out chords.

Everyone asks Kline about her parents and her age (she was only 19 when Frankie Cosmos' 2012 debut, *Zentropy*, was released to huge critical acclaim). In "Young," a single from last year, Kline addresses these fascinations, singing, "Have you heard I'm so young/And who my parents are?"

"Is it annoying that people ask about my family?" Kline asks. "Yeah, I wish I could forge my own narrative. But I'm also willing to accept that if it allows me to make my music. I mean, I'm close to my parents. They come to all my shows in town."

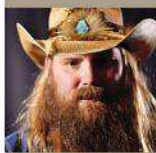
Kline started playing music at 14, after her aunt gave her an electric gui-

tar. She was drawn to bands including the Moldy Peaches, the Strokes and Jeffrey Lewis, New York acts who forged a distinct, attitude-drenched sound out of relatively simple, straight-ahead riffs and chords. She began releasing a torrent of songs online under the name Ingrid Superstar. When Kline met Aaron Maine, now her boyfriend, they formed a duo called Porches when Kline was still in high school.

Soon, Kline and Maine were performing all over the country as both Porches and Frankie Cosmos (Kline retired the Ingrid Superstar name once she developed a more unique sound). But as Kline began studying at NYU, she found she didn't have time for both bands. "I was playing two shows a night," she says, "and going to school, and traveling in a van all over, and managing all the tours myself."

Once *Zentropy* took off, Kline decided to take a break from college, though she wants to get back someday. "I want to study education or psychology," she says. "Something that, you know, leads to a job. But for now, I have to follow this while it's an opportunity. And my parents understand. They're artists. My mom started working when she was 16."

HEAR THIS by Chris Stapleton



SAM LEWIS

Sam is a great singer-songwriter. He reminds me of James Taylor's blue-eyed soul, and he has a Townes Van Zandt kind of vibe. I enjoy his writing, his singing, his playing, and he's a wonderful spirit. I kind of poached his band, but we're still friends.

Kline still manages her own tours, in addition to writing all the Frankie Cosmos songs and art-directing her music videos. Kline now has a full band behind her: Maine's brother David on bass, Luke Pyenson on drums, Lauren Martin on keyboards. Kline gets frustrated that she doesn't always get credit for bootstrapping the entire Frankie operation herself. "People love to take credit from you when you are a woman," she says. "It was written somewhere that my boyfriend co-wrote my albums. Are you kidding me? [Or] sometimes my parents get the credit for creating me and this music. They're great, but they aren't the ones doing the work."

Kline may come off as timid in person, but she grows tall onstage. She throws her whole body into strumming her guitar, and allows her vulnerability to become a strength – she sings about romantic confusion, urban malaise and maintaining a sense of optimism, with the forcefulness of someone who knows exactly what she wants to say. "All the stuff I feel in normal social situations is lifted onstage," she says. "I try to take into account that I'm being watched as much as I'm being heard. So when I play, I'm open to having an out-of-body experience." **RACHEL SYME**

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Anderson Paak

A little more than a decade ago, Anderson Paak was a high school kid in Ventura, California, playing drums in his Baptist church and setting chopped-up samples to homemade beats. A demo tape sparked deal meetings, and his dreams seemed to be taking solid

An L.A. soul-rap visionary who wowed Dr. Dre

form. "I thought I was going to be Kanye," he says. "The producer that can rap too."

But what came next was a nightmare. His mom – a South Korean-born woman who'd been in the produce business – and his stepdad were sent to prison for tax-related issues during his senior year. Paak stopped making music and started bagging groceries. "Just working and trying to get some stability," he says.

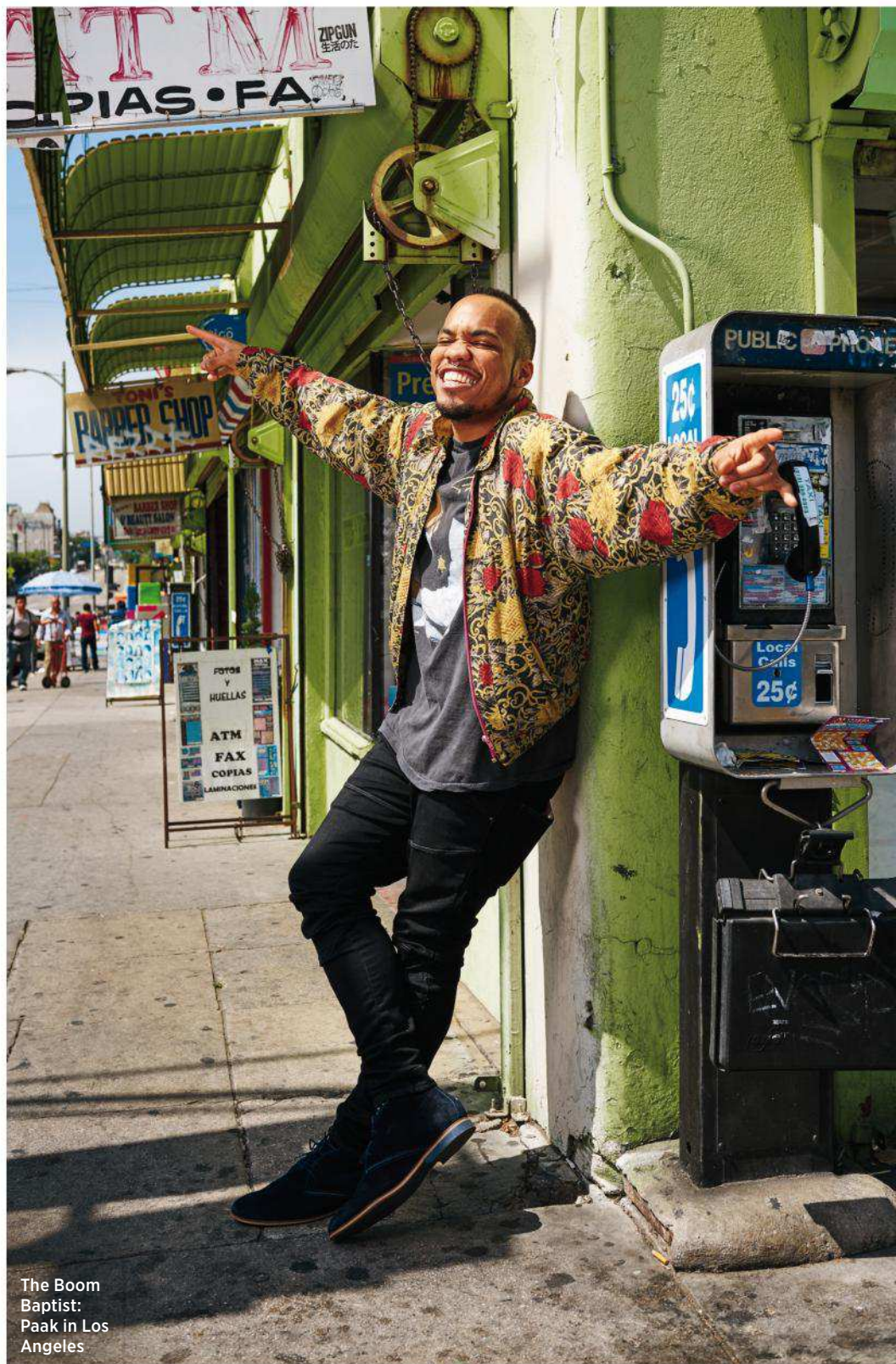
By the time he was 21, Paak was back in the studio with a new perspective. "I started making these weird little songs," he says. "I wanted it to be anything but hip-hop." He was listening to Radiohead and "finding all these different alternative types of music and punk-rock stuff. I didn't want to go back to making music like other people."

He didn't – but he took a while to find his voice. Paak played drums on the L.A. session scene, trimmed weed on a Santa Barbara pot farm, had a one-month marriage (annulled), a second marriage that has lasted (his baby boy is now five) and released two albums of atmospheric funk under the name Breezy Lovejoy. About four years ago, he decided it was time to focus and went into hibernation, studying the work of Otis Redding, Bobby Womack, Curtis Mayfield, David Bowie and the Beatles. When he re-emerged in 2014, he'd crafted the first Anderson Paak album, the hedonistic *Venice*.

Paak caught the attention of Dr. Dre, who tapped him for six cuts on *Compton* – including "Animals," a confrontational track about police brutality and the most politically pointed song Dre has made since "Fuck tha Police." Paak's work on *Compton* helped him recruit top-shelf producers, who brought classic West Coast hip-hop sounds to the dreamy R&B he'd worked on for his breakthrough LP, *Malibu*. "The visionary in the vintage Chevy," he calls himself in "The Waters." "I bring you greetings from the first church of Boom Baptists."

Paak, now 30, signed to Dre's label Aftermath after *Malibu*'s release. He's already planning his next move. "This will be the first project where I have a fucking budget," he says. "So this is going to be exciting times."

JOE LEVY



The Boom Baptist: Paak in Los Angeles

Mind playing tricks on us: Meechy, Zombie Juice and Arc (from left) of Flatbush Zombies.



Flatbush Zombies

Chloe x Halle

Beyoncé's favorite YouTube stars break out on their own

Sisters Chloe and Halle Bailey are only 17 and 16, respectively, but they have Michelle Obama as a fan, and they appeared on the video album for Beyoncé's *Lemonade*. "Magic was in the air in New Orleans," says Halle of their work in the clip for "Freedom." "We were saying, 'What a time to be alive.'" The sisters' music is just as impressive as their endorsers. Their EP *Sugar Symphony*—self-produced in their L.A. home—is an accomplished mix of R&B, jazz and alt-pop. "Our dad taught us to do everything on our own," Chloe says. "This industry is so dominated by men and older people," adds Halle. "You have to look into yourself and say, 'I can have wonderful ideas.'" **BRITTANY SPANOS**



Halle (left), Chloe

"SOMETIMES I LIKE TO TAKE A TRIP REAL DEEP INTO MY mind," says Meechy Darko of Brooklyn hip-hop trio Flatbush Zombies. "I travel back into my consciousness and face my demons." So far, that's worked out well for Flatbush Zombies, probably the first hip-hoppers to sell blotter paper alongside T-shirts at their concerts.

↑ This year, their darkly psychedelic debut, *3001: A Laced Odyssey*, hit Number One on *Billboard*'s Independent

Albums chart. "I wanted people to be like, 'Damn, this is like a movie trailer,'" says producer Erick "Arc" Elliott. "I wanted [the album] to take a journey that

transcends into the darkness and gets happy again." The Zombies have been buddies since grade school, and all live in the same apartment complex. Elliott took up production years ago so he could entertain his mother after she lost her vision, and part of what makes *3001* stand out is the realism woven into its trippiness ("Fly Away" addresses a friend's suicide). "There's no downfall [in most rap songs]," says Meechy. "No one's getting anyone pregnant. Nobody's going broke. No two sides." It doesn't seem they'll be running short on inspiration. Says Meechy, "They say, 'Don't look into a mirror when you trip on acid.' That's my favorite thing to do." **JASON NEWMAN**

An acid-loving hip-hop crew takes on the dark side of reality

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SWMRS

How a famous dad and Miley shaped a great punk band

Jump right in: Bassist Seb Mueller, Joey Armstrong, Max Becker and Cole Becker (from left) of SWMRS

SWMRS co-leader Cole Becker is hanging from the ceiling. The California punk rockers are charging through bracing, hook-y songs off their debut, *Drive North*, at a New York show. They even

return to the stage after their allotted set time and keep rocking unplugged. Though just hitting their twenties, SWMRS have been playing clubs like this for years; they formed in elementary school and had assistance from their drummer Joey Armstrong's father—Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day. "When we were 13 to 14, he was telling us to

text every time we wrote a song," says singer-guitarist Max Becker.

Despite attaining early credibility, SWMRS (who released two albums in their teens as Emily's Army) found the scene too bro-ish ("Aggressive dudes crowd-surfing on 14-year-old girls," says Cole). One song on *Drive North* was inspired by millennial feminist icon Tavi

Gevinson, while "Miley" unironically celebrates the pop star, who they admire for her work with homeless LGBTQ teens. "I think they have the potential to be ginormous," says Zac Carper, of fellow Cali punks FIDLAR, who produced *Drive North*. "They just do whatever the fuck they want, and I want to see more of that in bands." **BRITTANY SPANOS**

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: JODY ROGAC; BEN RAYNER; CYBELE

Flume

An EDM whiz finds the 'human element'

Electronic music has been good to Harley Streten, a.k.a. Flume. His blend of stuttering beats, trance-y synth swoops and woozy ambient effects has scored him Top 20 hits in his native Australia and featured spots at Coachella and Lollapalooza. But as the 24-year-old approached his second album, *Skin*, he wanted more. "A lot of electronic music out there feels cold," he says. "I want to incorporate a human element."

Streten started making tracks at 13, using software that came on a disc in a cereal box. His first album, released in 2012, had offbeat rhythmic and melodic touches. For *Skin*, he wrote "actual songs," he says. "Really heavy festival moments, really beautiful songs with vocals, and also some ambient stuff."

Tracks with Vince Staples and Raekwon "re-create the energy of EDM but with a hip-hop feel," and his collaborations with Tove Lo and Kai are stuffed with earworm hooks, the result of writing sessions that saw him boiling down multiple songs into one. "I like pop music," he says. "And I like really weird, strange stuff. It just didn't feel like there was anyone doing both."

JOE LEVY



Go with the flow: Valle, Zutrau and Sulkow (from left) of Wet.

HEAR THIS by Andrew Savage of Parquet Courts



B BOYS

They're a band from the same Denton, Texas, scene I come from. They have two distinct songwriters: Brendon Avalos and Britton Walker, the "B" boys. They swat lead vocals back and forth, and you can tell they're good friends just by listening. I fully endorse their [debut] EP, *No Worry No Mind*. There aren't a lot of records where every song is super-impressive, but that is one of them.

Wet

BROOKLYN HAS BECOME A TOP EXPORTER OF GREAT SYNTH-pop bands in recent years. But Wet have set themselves apart with music that combines the elegant ache of Nineties R&B with the raw honesty of indie pop. "I feel like that's a very pure thing," singer Kelly Zutrau says. "When you can get as close as possible to a pure emotional intensity – that's when people hear something real in it." The songs on Wet's debut LP, *Don't You*, wring drama out of lyrics that often suggest snippets of actual relationship dialogue. Onstage, Zutrau delivers her confessional lyrics with an eyes-closed forcefulness that can be captivating and a little uncomfortable. The 28-year-old grew up a fan of Cat Power and TLC, dropping out of high school in Massachusetts to pursue art and music in New York, where she met multi-instrumentalists Joe Valle and Marty Sulkow. Wet released an EP in 2013 and pulled down opening gigs for Chvrches and Tobias Jesso Jr. For *Don't You*, the bandmates retreated to a house in western Massachusetts, where they wrote in a meditative isolation that comes through in their songs. Lately, Zutrau has been living in L.A. and writing with Rostam Batmanglij, formerly of Vampire Weekend. "[*Don't You*] is about relationships," she says. "About managing ideas that are hard to deal with. It helped me process them."

Synth-poppers turn quiet angst into an excellent album

HILARY HUGHES



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Reviews

"Why you gotta fight with me at Cheesecake/You know I love to go there/Say I'm actin' light-skin, I can't take you nowhere."
—DRAKE, "Child's Play"

Drake Proves You Can Go Home Again

The hip-hop icon takes us on a guided tour of his awesome woes and lavishly insular world



Drake

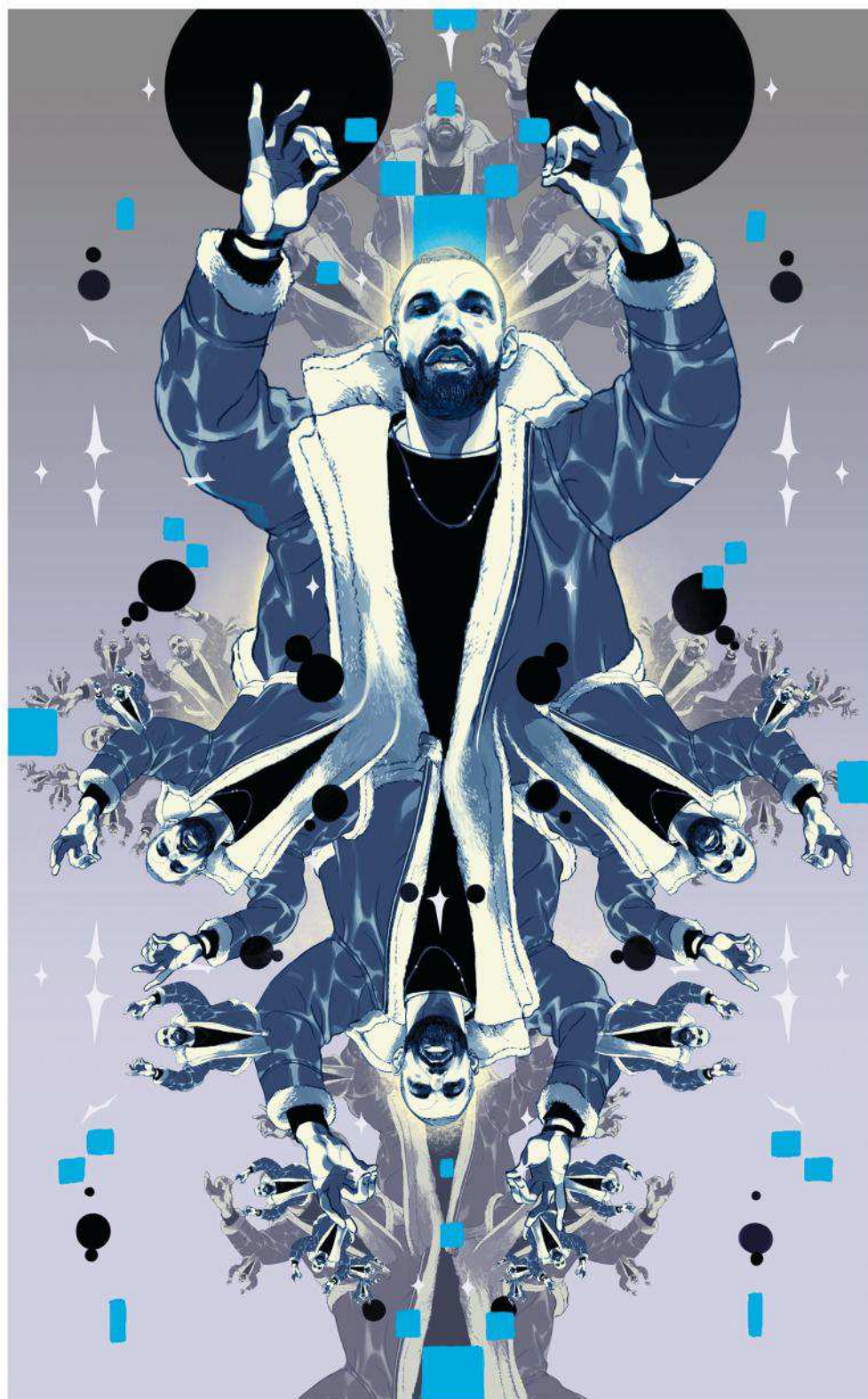
Views Young Money/
Cash Money/Republic

★★★★½

BY JONAH WEINER

The best thing you can say about Drake is the worst thing, too: He's a lightweight. That description suits his nimbleness at switching between flows and genres, and his stunning economy when crafting hooks. But his fourth album reveals him as a lightweight in other, frustrating ways: shallow in his thematic concerns, slender in the scope of his ambitions. It's impossible not to compare *Views* with recent opuses by Drake's pop-titan peers—Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar, Rihanna, Kanye West. Where those artists framed personal sagas within higher-stakes issues of race, gender and class, Drake remains obsessively focused on one thing: Drake (his armada of girlfriends, his guilt and grievances, his lavishly insular world). The result is an occasionally excellent LP that feels naggingly like a retread.

On *So Far Gone*, his 2009 breakthrough mixtape, Drake



BACKSTAGE PASS

SPECIAL OFFERS AND PROMOTIONS

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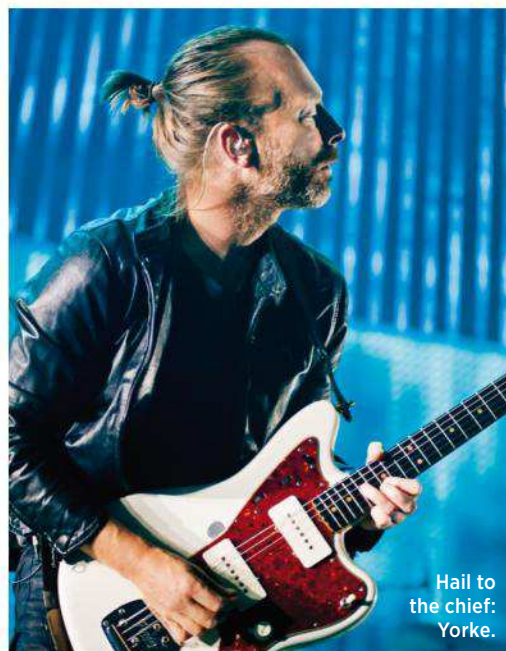
AUSTIN CITY LIMITS **15** YRS MUSIC FESTIVAL

Reviews

paired skeletal beats with a mournful brand of arrogance, an effect he made de rigueur on his best albums, 2011's *Take Care* and 2013's *Nothing Was the Same*. *Views* is longer than those – verging on bloat at 20 tracks – and takes longer to ingratiate itself, although time in its company reveals some careful craftsmanship and ingenuity. On the sumptuous slow-burners “Redemption” and “Fire & Desire,” the production – overseen, as usual, by the masterful Noah “40” Shebib – puts spectral R&B samples into play with chilly chords and clipped drums. These tracks suggest a mood, then leave the heavy lifting to Drake. But he doesn't consistently hold up his end of that bargain. In song after song, success – and Drake's monomania chasing it – poisons friendships and hampers relationships with women. At points, Drake invokes this predicament almost by rote, slipping too often into familiar cadences, like he's doing a Drake impression.

For Drake, the past is a defining preoccupation: Try as he might to enjoy “yachts so big they try to hit me with boat fins,” as he raps on “Grammys,” undertows of nostalgia and gloom drag him into recollections both happy and sad. The backdrop here is his native Toronto, which he conjures more vividly than ever; romances gone wrong provide the animating emotional tension. “Too Good” is a bubbly kiss-off featuring Rihanna; on “Child's Play,” a love interest argues with Drake at a Cheesecake Factory, then drives off in his Bugatti “to CVS for Kotex.” These are funny, unexpected vignettes, and you wish there was more of that sense of playful surprise across the LP. Instead, Drake opts for vague, petulant recriminations, raising the question of whether he's stuck in a rut – and how much we can truly care about the view from down there. **C**

LISTEN NOW!
Hear key tracks from these albums at RollingStone.com/albums.



Radiohead's Latest Brilliant Panic Attack

Thom Yorke and Co. blend electronics and orchestrations on a lovely LP

Radiohead *A Moon Shaped Pool* ★★★★★½



Radiohead's ninth LP was launched with the band erasing its social media and releasing a single (“Burn the Witch”) that featured classical musicians whacking wooden instruments.

Welcome to the new, artisanal Radiohead: a semi-unplugged, old-worldly antidote to the low-flying panic attacks of digital life. “Burn the Witch” opens their first proper LP in five years by evoking a lynch mob (of Internet shamers? North Carolina bathroom hysterics?), proving once again how well they tap our collective night sweats.

Where *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* were defined by electronic music, this record is grounded in orchestral arrangements, presumably via moonlighting soundtrack composer Jonny Greenwood. Electronics remain, with magic in the blending; check the string coda, receding over static, on “Tinker Tailor Soldier Sailor Rich Man Poor Man Beggar Man Thief.” Thom Yorke's voice is still the emotional center, never more affecting. On “Glass Eyes,” he begins, “Hey, it's me/I just got off the train/A frightening place.” It's like a cellphone call from an empty station that drops out. The entire record is like that: an object lesson in slow, attentive listening. **WILL HERMES**



James Blake

The Colour in Anything Polydor ★★½

U.K. avant-garde electronic star proves why he's Beyoncé's favorite sad-sound sculptor

James Blake specializes in quiet storms that move like ice floes. After getting his start in the London dubstep underground, he's emerged as the slow-jam maestro for sad post-grads. Now, he's enjoying a pop moment, contributing songs to projects like Beyoncé's *Lemonade* and the forthcoming Frank Ocean LP. Blake's third album (all 76 minutes of it) reaches back to the abstract electronics and agile, brittle beats of his early EPs while pushing his songwriting toward new levels of urgently forlorn grandeur. "Radio Silence" deploys wintry pianos, weeping synths and meditative vocals to conjure soulful dread; "Choose Me" makes falling in love feel like falling into a void; and "Timeless" slowly evolves from a quiver to a banger – "You know you slide out when you slide in, with graceful shadow," Blake sings. He could be reviewing his own record.

RENATO PAGNANI



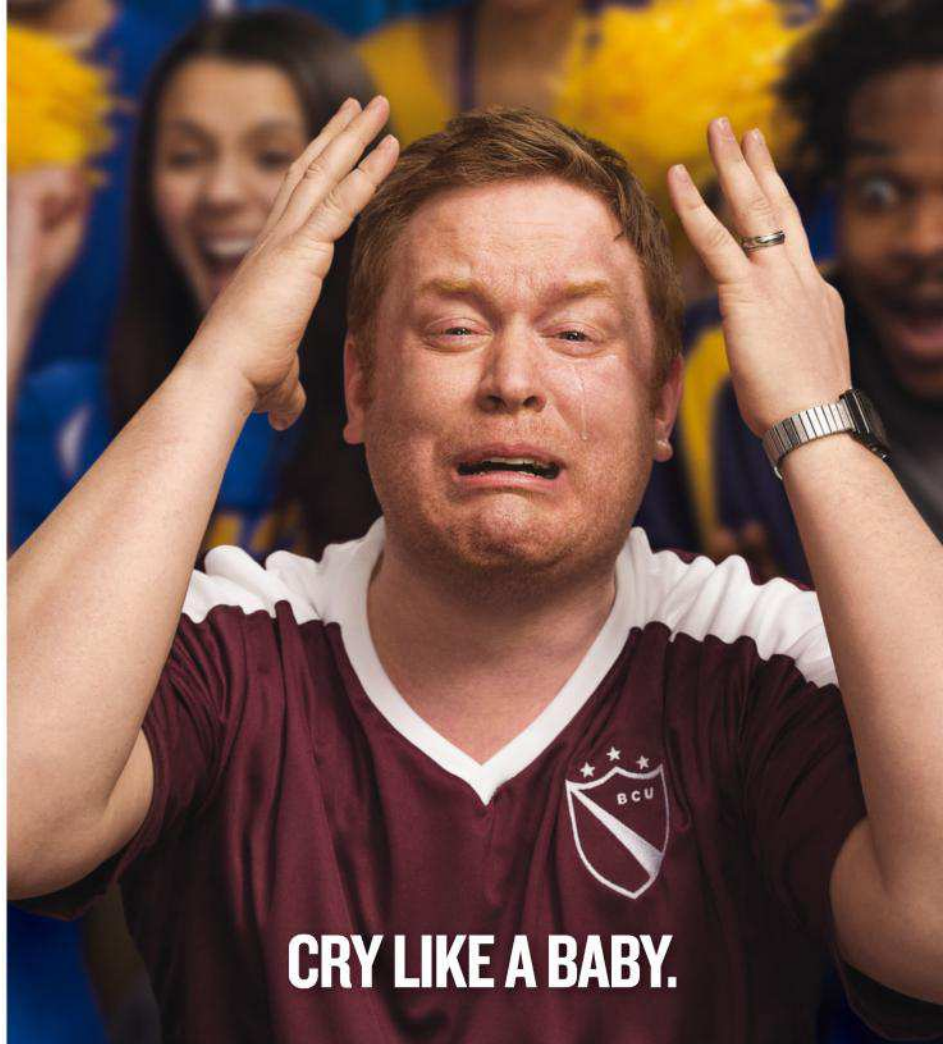
The Monkees

Good Times! Rhino ★★½

A fantastic comeback with help from superfans like Rivers Cuomo and Noel Gallagher

The Monkees' first album in nearly 20 years is also their best since the Sixties. It's a labor of love – not just for the three surviving lads, but for all the Monkeemaniacs pitching in, headed by producer Adam Schlesinger (from Fountains of Wayne), who contributes the gem "Our Own World." It nails the classic summer-jangle Monkees sound, with fantastic new tunes from Rivers Cuomo, Andy Partridge and the mod squad of Noel Gallagher and Paul Weller. Micky Dolenz, Mike Nesmith and the mighty Peter Tork are all in top shape – their voices have aged as handsomely as they have. When they harmonize on Ben Gibbard's wistful, folky lament "Me & Magdalena," it's a miraculously gorgeous moment of time-travel mind warp. And as a last word from the late Davy Jones, there's his version of the Neil Diamond nugget "Love to Love." Monkees freaks have waited far too long for this album. But it was worth it.

ROB SHEFFIELD



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Reviews



Mudcrutch

2 Warner Bros. Reprise ★★★★★

Petty's re-formed first band goes deeper on its second LP

When Tom Petty reassembled his first, pre-Heartbreakers band in 2007, it may have seemed like a novelty. Now, with a second album, Mudcrutch feel like a steady moonlighting gig. This record is more of a band effort than the decades-delayed debut – all of the members get writing credits, and all get a shot at a lead vocal. The songs tend to lean toward punchy Southern rock. But there are surprise twists too, like guitarist Tom Leadon's "The Other Side of the Mountain," a bluegrass benediction cut with psych-rock guitar charge.

ALAN LIGHT



Mike Posner

At Night, Alone Island ★★★

Bieber and Maroon 5 songcrafter gets his Paul Simon on

Mike Posner had a hit in 2010 with the cocky dance-pop tune "Cooler Than Me." Yet despite writing credits for Maroon 5 and Justin Bieber, it took him five years and two aborted albums until an EDM remix of his strummy "I Took a Pill in Ibiza" finally got him back on the charts. Posner's second LP smartly fleshes out his new persona: the talented everyman. His wry, pleasant voice suggests Paul Simon during acoustic-driven tunes like "One Hell of a Song," a boast about choosing craft over stardom, and "Buried in Detroit," a heartfelt homage to his hometown.

KEITH HARRIS



White Lung

Paradise Domino ★★★★★½

Hungry young punks kick up a gloriously hostile racket

Ever ask yourself, "What music would they play at a bridal shower in hell?" Wonder no more. It's the gig Mish Barber-Way was born for. She and her crew of Vancouver punk ruffians whip up a gloriously hostile racket, sharpening the raw attack of their 2014 breakthrough, *Deep Fantasy*. The songs gain a mammoth melodic crunch thanks to guitar whiz Kenny William, who sounds like Johnny Marr with his cardigan on fire. As Barber-Way warns in "Hungry," "You are never safe from yourself" – yet that sense of danger is what makes White Lung punks to believe in.

ROB SHEFFIELD



Anohni

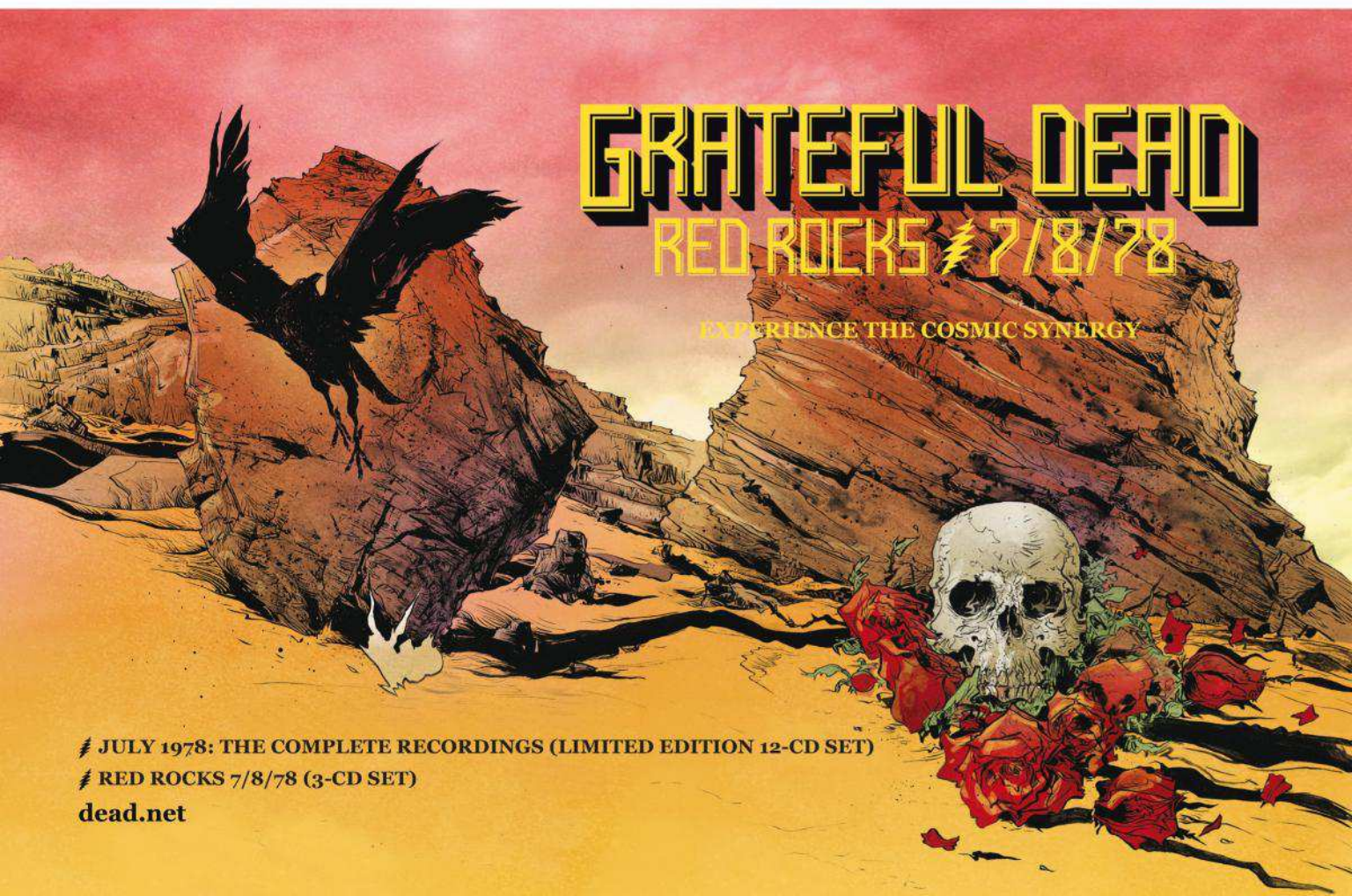
Hopelessness Secretly Canadian

★★★★½

Trans artist powerfully mixes deep politics and club pop

"It's an American dream," coos the transgender artist formerly known as Antony on "Execution," a spangled pop jam about state-sanctioned murder. This extraordinary LP fuses disco, blues, gospel and protest-song testifying. Despite the rangy gorgeousness of Anohni's voice and the music's electronic dazzle (created with Oneohtrix Point Never and Hudson Mohawke), it isn't easy listening ("Watch Me" wryly serenades the surveillance state as if placating an abusive lover). But it's as difficult to reckon with as it is hard to forget.

WILL HERMES



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Various Artists

Day of the Dead 4AD

★★★★½

The National helm a five-hour tribute to the Grateful Dead

This 59-track Grateful Dead tribute touches every aspect of their golden legacy, including Afropop (Orchestra Baobab's lush "Franklin's Tower"), roots rock (Lucinda Williams' humid "Going Down the Road Feeling Bad"), psychedelia (the Flaming Lips tripping out on "Dark Star") and indie guitar rock (Stephen Malkmus' 10-minute "China Cat Sunflower"). Bob Weir appears on two great live tracks, with Wilco and album curators the National, putting his stamp on a set that makes you hear his old band in dozens of inventive new ways. **JON DOLAN**

JOHN SHEARER

Dylan Does Sinatra, Part 2

Looking for that old black magic in the Great American Songbook

Bob Dylan *Fallen Angels* Columbia

★★★★½



Bob Dylan loves to fully plumb his good ideas. So it's unsurprising that *Fallen Angels* continues his foraging of the Great American Songbook via tunes made famous by Frank Sinatra, whose colloquial delivery Dylan evidently learned plenty from.

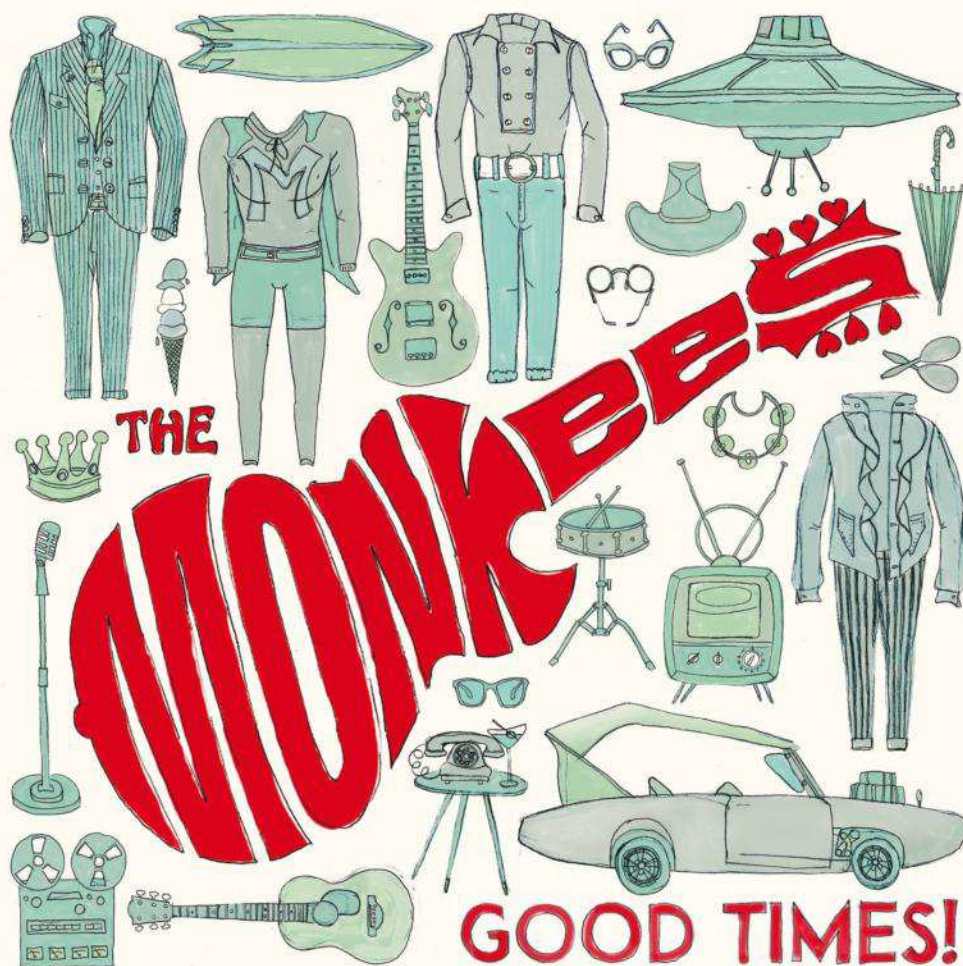
Fallen Angels isn't merely overstock from last year's *Shadows in the Night*, though Dylan's approach is similar. His phrasing remains spectacular, sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes hilarious, and the playing is sublime. The horns are gone – no big loss – and the core band is nicely expanded with session guitar legend Dean Parks. Dylan vet Donnie Herron steps up, adding Texas swing and Hawaiian flavors on steel guitar ("Young at Heart," "Polka Dots



Young at heart: Dylan

and Moonbeams") and using a viola to channel Hot Club jazziness. The songs date mostly to the Forties and Fifties, with a spotlight on rhyme-animal lyricist Johnny Mercer. Two highlights, "Skylark" and "That Old Black Magic," are both reputed to be about Mercer's lover Judy Garland. Are they the "fallen angels" of the title? Is Dylan messaging his own paramour? Is this another trilogy in the making? At 75 years old, the man can still keep us guessing. **WILL HERMES**

55



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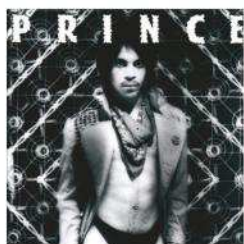


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Essential Prince

A guide to Prince's best, deepest and most overlooked albums – from pop landmarks to funk odysseys and beyond. By Joe Levy

MUST-HAVES



Dirty Mind

1980

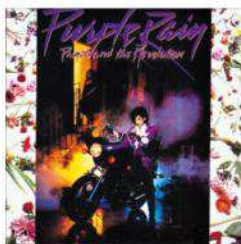
For his third album and first masterpiece, he wanted to be more deliberately *me*, he told *Rolling Stone* at the time. So he stripped down his sound, and for the album cover, he stripped down to his underwear. Recorded at his home on Lake Minnetonka, outside Minneapolis (where he knocked out several songs in one night), *Dirty Mind* targeted New Wavers as much as funkateers. The sound was manic and spacious at the same time, and the songs were packed with sexual obsession. Prince euphorically sang about taboo subject matter: a threesome in "When You Were Mine," incest in "Sister," an all-races-welcome orgy in "Uptown" and the self-explanatory "Head," in which a virgin bride goes down on him on the way to her wedding. But his orgiastic utopia was a friendly place – that virgin bride from "Head"? He marries her. And his party was just getting started.



1999

1982

Though *1999* was credited to Prince and the Revolution, he was still essentially recording as a one-man band. "He wanted a movement instead of just a band," said guitarist Dez Dickerson. He got it. Prince danced on the edge of the world on "1999," made his vulnerability into a sex brag on "Little Red Corvette," paid his way with his tears on "Lady Cab Driver," made rockabilly modern with "Delirious" and perfected a drum-machine sound that made this one of the most influential records of its time.



Purple Rain

1984

After *1999* gave him two Top 10 hits, Prince wanted more. So for the soundtrack to his semi-autobiographical blockbuster movie, he turned up his guitar and scored

two Number One singles: first, the Freudian mystery dance "When Doves Cry," and then the glam-garage rocker "Let's Go Crazy." *Purple Rain* was his first real band album (the title track was recorded live at his hometown club First Avenue), and from the gospel preaching that opens the LP ("We are gathered here today to get through this thing called life") to the baptismal blessings of "Purple Rain" at the end, his spiritual and erotic fusion was never louder, or bigger.

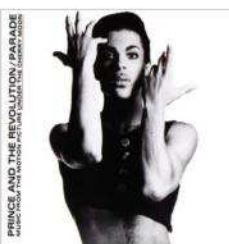


Sign 'O' the Times

1987

A kaleidoscopic double LP, with almost every song a shape-shifter: The panty-dropping "Hot Thing" opened up into psychedelic horn and synth melodies; garage-rock mash notes like "I Could Never Take the Place of Your Man" launched mystical guitar journeys. The spare title track was a tour of the headlines (AIDS, drugs, gangs) that went to Number Three; "U Got the Look" was heckla-slammin' pop mastery. But small gems like the one-man gospel call-and-response of "Forever in My Life" made his genius seem inexhaustible. One of the best albums of the Eighties.

FURTHER LISTENING



Parade

1986

Prince hired an orchestral arranger with a jazz background for the soundtrack to his second film, *Under the Cherry Moon*. But even the tracks without strings merged new-funk snap with cinematic sweep. "Kiss" was nothing but snap, and the closing ballad, "Sometimes It Snows in April," was "written on the spot," according to guitarist Wendy Melvoin.

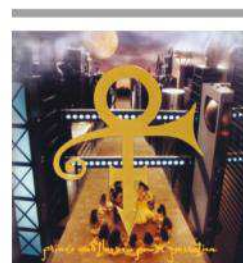


The Black Album

1988

Prince pulled this album in 1987 because he thought it was "evil," but he also knew these funk vamps were (as one title put it) "Superfunkcalifragisexy."

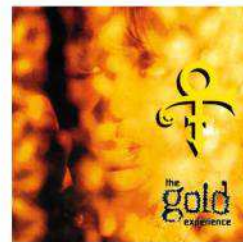
He even performed some of them live. Cut the grim pimp monologue "Bob George" and you have an album full of dance, music, sex and, on "When 2 R in Love," even a dash of romance.



Love Symbol

1992

A would-be "rock soap opera," it worked as a concept album about a man whose name was still Prince, and he was still funky. "Sexy M.F." took off from James Brown's "Hot Pants"; "The Morning Papers" was baroque pop with cloud-hopping guitar; and "7" mixed "The Humpty Dance" and biblical mysticism.

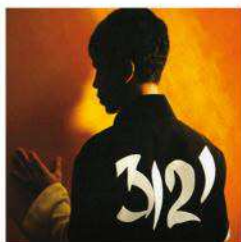


Gold Experience

1995

The moist ballad "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World" was his last major hit, but he was breaking ties with his label and everything except his own

vision – it didn't matter. "P. Control" was his best foray into rap, "Shhh" a slow-jam excuse for arena-rock guitar, and "Shy" a noir fantasy that grafted Sly Stone riffs onto L.A. pop.

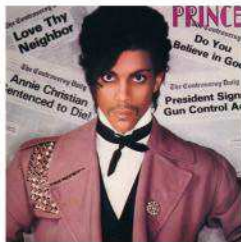


3121

2006

Proof that he could turn it on whenever he wanted: "Black Sweat" was yet another way of getting on the good foot. And even if he was now advocating keeping your clothes on, three songs in the middle – "Incense and Candles," "Love" and "Satisfied" – were classic Prince red-light specials.

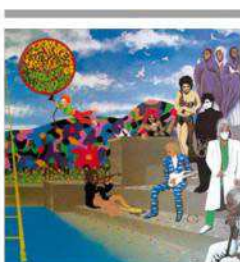
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Controversy

1981

Prince later said he wasn't sure "which direction I wanted to go" when he began work on *Dirty Mind*'s follow-up. "Sexuality" and "Jack U Off" are must-hear, but he still hadn't left disco behind. The title track ("Am I black or white? Am I straight or gay?") showed how good he was at pushing buttons. He'd only get better.



Around the World in a Day

1985

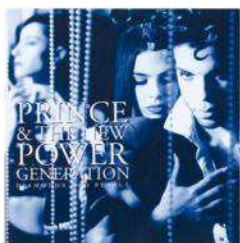
This was a retreat after the world-conquering *Purple Rain*. Despite "Raspberry Beret" and "Pop Life," it was slight, and his dialogue with God in "Temptation" was his first true embarrassment.



Lovesexy

1988

The angular groove of "Alphabet St." is a brand-new bag that never lets up, but the God-is-love talk gets in the way of the sex, which, for once, isn't fully satisfying.



Diamonds and Pearls

1991

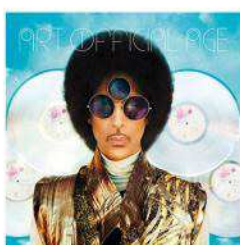
His first album with the New Power Generation sent the lust-filled "Cream" to Number One and the love-praising title ballad to Number Three. The result was his biggest album since *Purple Rain*.



Musicology

2004

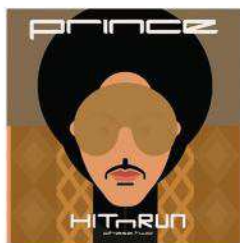
Released just after his Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction, with a fresh, lean sound. Highlights include "Musicology" (yet another James Brown reinvention) and "On the Couch" (where he doesn't want to sleep).



Art Official Age

2014

The aqueous funk of "Breakfast Can Wait" made for his funniest song in many years. No hotcakes with honey, thanks: "I think I want another bite of you."



HitnRun Phase 2

2015

The Black Lives Matter movement inspired "Baltimore," his sharpest political statement, and a bigger horn section made it seem like he could keep doing this forever. If his vault has stuff this good, maybe he can.

Hidden Gems

Essential songs from Prince's less-memorable albums

"Soft & Wet" from *For You* 1978

The keyboard funk of his debut was too light to burn rubber, but the weird synth squiggles showed he was looking for new sounds from the start.

"I Wanna Be Your Lover" from *Prince* 1979

His first R&B Number One hit introduced him to the world – bouncy keyboards, a disco groove and one request: "I wanna be the only one you come for."

"Scandalous" from *Batman* 1989

A bubble-bath slow jam sung in a pained falsetto that adds grit to the fantasy.

"Joy in Repetition" from *Graffiti Bridge* 1990

Underwater soul rock in the style of Jimi Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland*, cut during the sessions that yielded *Sign 'O' the Times*.

"Loose!" from *Come* 1994

A techno fantasy with wild guitar – it's like he's scoring a "rave" scene in a soft-core cable movie (in a good way!).

"One Kiss at a Time" from *Emancipation* 1996

Celebrating "every nervous twitch that happens when my tongue is there." Slowly. Very slowly.

"Supercute" from *The Chocolate Invasion* 2004

Rhymes with "birthday suit," which is what she wears when she dances. His guitar coos and moans in appreciation.

"Empty Room" from *C-Note* 2004

This tear-stained ballad dates back to 1985. The live version here fills its emptiness with feedback.

"The Truth" from *The Truth* 2007

Solo acoustic blues about choices, lies and time – so sharp you could shave with the guitar strings.

"Guitar" from *Planet Earth* 2007

His guitar, unlike his girl, is always faithful. This rocker starts with glam power chords and keeps getting louder.

"No More Candy 4 U" from *LotusFlow3R* 2009

A garage-rock throwback to the days of "Let's Go Crazy," as he puts down punks, freaks and haters on the Internet.

Starting a Revolution: Prince in 1985



By Peter Travers

Clooney vs. Wall St.

Money Monster

George Clooney,
Julia Roberts

Directed by Jodie Foster

★★★

HATING ON WALL STREET IS the new national pastime. And Jodie Foster, in her fourth film as a director, goes for the burn. That she does it in the form of a vividly entertaining action thriller starring George Clooney and Julia Roberts is icing on the cake. Like last year's *The Big Short*, *Money Monster* wants you to laugh till it hurts. But Foster's subject isn't just the corrupt financial system but the human beings getting mangled in its gears.

A stellar Clooney plays Lee Gates, the host of TV's *Money Monster*, in which he gives stock tips between clownish dance numbers and comedy bits. Think a (more) extreme version of *Mad Money*'s Jim Cramer. Gates treats everyone like crap, including Patty Fenn (an excellent Roberts), his long-suffering producer, who's thinking of jumping ship.

Then, midshow, a guy wired with explosives pushes into the studio, points a gun at Gates



Clooney, as a TV stock guru, gets arrested.

and holds him hostage on live TV. The guy, Kyle Budwell (Jack O'Connell), having lost his savings on a Gates tip, wants revenge and a chance to expose a rigged system.

That's the setup, which Foster engineers for maximum, real-time, ticking-bomb suspense. As Budwell moves Gates downtown to Wall Street to confront the CEO (Dominic West) who blames a technical glitch for his company's flame-out, Foster moves her film from a pulse-quickening nail-biter, with SWAT teams and choppers swirling, to an incisive look at a beleaguered America undergoing a crisis of faith.

Clooney has plenty of fun mocking the empty suit he's playing, but he ups the ante by showing the fear, self-hatred and buried integrity that are eating at Gates. And Roberts makes her harried producer an oasis of calm in the gathering storm. What the script lacks in emotional subtext you'll find in their richly detailed performances. Unlike Budwell, Gates hasn't let his rage against the machine push him over the line. Not yet, anyway. Foster's film doesn't doubt that money rules our lives. But it does wonder, provocatively, why we're dumb enough to let it.

Comic Noir Misfires

The Nice Guys

Russell Crowe, Ryan Gosling

Directed by Shane Black

★★★

RUSSELL CROWE AND RYAN Gosling are clearly enjoying the hell out of each other in this crime caper set in 1970s Los Angeles. Is their rowdy give-and-take and relentless head-bashing enough to disguise the movie's incoherence? Hardly. Shane Black (*Iron Man 3*) is listed as the director and co-writer, but Crowe and Gosling seem to be making things up as they



AN ALL-STAR L.A. STORY

Gosling and Crowe team up to trade punches and comic insults.

go along. Not always a bad thing. Gosling plays Holland March, a private dick. And Crowe is Jackson Healy, a hired gun with no patience for March's dicking around. They reluctantly unite to find the missing Amelia (Margaret Qualley), a friend of March's daughter, Holly (Angourie Rice), who knows Amelia is mixed up in porn and murder and that her mom (Kim Basinger) wants justice. Crowe and Basinger teamed up in 1997's *L.A. Confidential*. Basinger won an Oscar. Confidentially, *The Nice Guys* is not for Academy consideration. But if you'll settle for random lunacy, dig right in.

Seth Rogen Returns to Animal House

Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising

Seth Rogen, Zac Efron

Directed by Nicholas Stoller

★★½

HOW TO BUILD A SEQUEL TO 2014's comedy smash *Neighbors*, in which new parents Mac (Seth Rogen) and Kelly (Rose Byrne) waged war on the frat boys next door and their ab-fab leader, Teddy (Zac Efron)? Easy. Change the frat to a sorority. I'm not kidding.

But the joke's on us, because director Nicholas Stoller gets in wicked digs at 2.0 stoners and sexists. Rogen and Byrne are crazy-fun company. And the sorority sisters, led by Shelby (Chloë Grace Moretz),

NO TOGA

Rogen goes ninja and bares all for dumb fun.

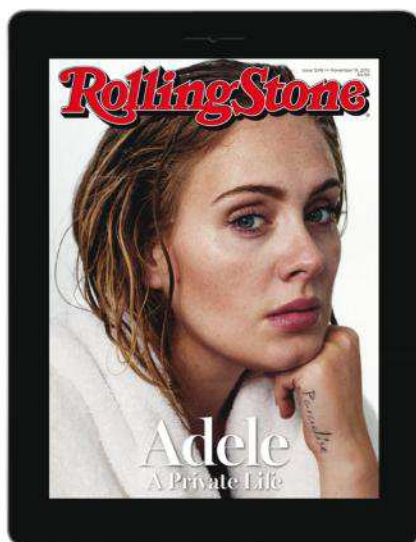


have a point about hating "super-rape-y" frats and wanting to go rogue. Rogen and Co. aren't delivering anything fresh here, just more laughs. Efron gets his share as the aging hottie who takes a hit from the girls: "You're not like us, dude, you're an old person," says one. *Neighbors 2* lets feelings show through the farce, and that counts for something.

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OSCAR ISAAC

[Cont. from 39] Isaac began acting out. He and a friend tried to break into a movie theater, and a week later they vandalized their school, writing a lot of “fucks and shits and ass” on a mural, spraying a fire extinguisher in the gym. Isaac was promptly expelled. He would have gone to an even stricter Christian school were it not for an actual act of God: Hurricane Andrew destroyed his house while his family was huddled inside, and obliterated what would have been his new school. He instead ended up in a public high school, where he fell into the local punk scene: “Bruce [Ferguson] showed up one day with a mohawk and was like, ‘Ska, man! Fucking ska!’”

Isaac was straight-edge through high school, avoiding drugs and alcohol, which imparted a sense of apartness and control he enjoyed. He didn’t break those rules until his mid-twenties, around the time a friend at Juilliard was senselessly murdered. “I remember I said, ‘I fucking need a drink,’ and I had a drink,” he recalls. “I thought, ‘What am I afraid this is going to do?’” For good measure, he started smoking weed with his pothead roommate. “I was like, ‘Whaddya got there? This is a bong? Is that what they call this? Give it over here. Oh, this is nice. Wow. I should’ve been doing this a long time ago!’”

After high school, he attended community college, worked at a hospital – moving bodies both living and dead (“You see so much extreme human emotion”) – and continued with his bands. He also started auditioning for local theater, where he became an instant star, despite having close to zero training. “There was a natural energy I had that worked,” says Isaac, who had done theater on and off since grade school. A playwright he met in Florida cast him as a young Fidel Castro in an off-Broadway production. Wandering through Manhattan during the play’s run, Isaac passed by Juilliard, and with characteristic insouciance he decided to apply on the spot.

His urge to act was fueled in large part by “a lot of existential despair.” “For me there’s always been an element of feeling displaced,” he says. “We’re little islands into ourselves. I had that feeling in kindergarten!” Because of his background? “No,” he says, unsmiling. “Just because of the despair of existence.” I remind him of the *Annie Hall* scene where the title character’s therapist tells her to come in five times a week, and Isaac laughs.

“It’s not depression,” he clarifies. “It doesn’t actually make me depressed. It’s more like a cosmic sense of maybe a little dread. And there’s a desire, maybe a need, to express that. And when you get someone else to feel that, too, that’s a good sensation. I don’t know why that is!”

Isaac’s favorite movies straddle the line between comedy and tragedy – it’s something he tries to capture even in a role as dark as his Golden Globe-winning turn as a doomed politician in David Simon’s *Show Me a Hero*. Sidney Lumet’s *Dog Day Afternoon* is Isaac’s most-watched film of all time, in part because of its mastery of that tone – not to mention Al Pacino’s performance. When Isaac met him, he told the older man that his work in that movie had the purity of a child actor. Isaac himself chases that feeling: “I like when you watch something and you get the sense it’s something you’re not supposed to be seeing.”

A WEEK OR SO AFTER HIS NEW York jam session, on the first pleasant day of the year in London, with actual sunshine in sight, Isaac is sitting at a wood table outside a high-end ramen place in SoHo. It’s another day off from *Star Wars*, which is shooting a few miles away. Today’s T-shirt is gray, and he’s wearing what look like the same grayish-black jeans from the week before, well-worn Italian boots and a newsboy hat. Isaac engages intensely in conversation, with a quick laugh, and the body-language equivalent of a poker face: He’ll cross his legs once, and they stay there. It’s as if he saves his mannerisms for his characters, stripping himself of idiosyncracies in the process.

In Brooklyn, no fans bugged Isaac, but here he gets a stream of constant, if low-key, attention. “Thank you for fixing *Star Wars*,” a young guy says to him.

Isaac wrinkles his brow. “Fixing it?”

“It’s fun again!” the guy replies. Isaac’s role as Poe Dameron – hotshot pilot, owner of spherical droid BB-8 – is small in *The Force Awakens*, and it was almost smaller: The original plan was to shock the audience by introducing the character and then rapidly killing him off; Isaac resisted the idea, then agreed, only to be told by director J.J. Abrams that Poe would live after all.

Isaac is in the movie’s opening scenes, and his loose, jazzy dialogue was the first, highly welcome clue that these new films would be more human in tone than George Lucas’ prequels. All of the funny lines – including one about Poe being unable to hear Adam Driver’s Kylo Ren through his helmet, and the “who talks first” exchange – were added in reshoots, and Isaac improvised some of them. He’s always pushing to complicate and deepen Poe, who started as little more than a charming archetype. “We’re making shit up as we go,” he says.

It’s clear that Poe Dameron is a far bigger deal in *Episode VIII*. Rumors suggested that the filmmakers enlarged the role because of the response to Isaac’s performance, but he suggests it’s simply because the character is no longer marked for death. “In the new film, there’s a lot more to do,”

Isaac says. “What happens now is the heroes get tested. All three of them” – Poe, Daisy Ridley’s Rey and John Boyega’s Finn – “get tested immensely.” And how’s BB-8 doing? “BB-8’s doing all right. BB-8 gets tested too! Everybody gets tested! It’s the dark second chapter, but not really dark.”

Isaac made a substantial, even life-altering career commitment to the *Star Wars* franchise: “It’s the first time in my life when things have been mapped out for quite some time,” he says. “I’m basically Star Warring until 2020.” He did so with startlingly little deliberation, making the decision on almost pure instinct. “It wasn’t an overly mapped-out move,” he says. (So far, it hasn’t kept him from weightier fare: He’s starring alongside Christian Bale in *The Promise*, a film set against the Armenian genocide, and signed on to *A Foreigner*, a knotty thriller set in his native Guatemala.)

Then again, joining the fictional galactic Resistance is a less consequential decision than another one Isaac almost made even more impulsively: After high school, he nearly joined the Marines. “The recruiter was really cool,” recalls Isaac, who thought he’d become a combat photographer. He went as far as taking an initial oath and passing a physical – “They check your balls, they check everything” – before deciding he would rather be in the Reserve. That’s fine, he was told, but reservists couldn’t do photography. Instead, he’d train for an anti-tank division: “So I’m the guy against the tanks?” he asked himself, before rapidly losing interest. Had he joined, he would have almost certainly gone to Afghanistan or Iraq. “Sometimes I do wonder what that version of things could have been,” he says.

It can be a little exhausting, all this work, all this throwing yourself into the role and the moment, so Isaac tries to live by a quote from art photographer Saul Leiter: “I don’t have a philosophy. I have a camera.” But it would be a lot easier to have a philosophy. Then Isaac might be able to figure out when he’s actually succeeding in the face of all his success. “I’m getting a lot of what I would have hoped for in this line of work,” Isaac says. “But you realize happiness and fulfillment is not going to be an external thing. And that’s a little scary.... Having gone this long – two years, basically, without stopping – some fatigue can set in.”

Next year, he’ll take his idea of a vacation, playing Hamlet in New York. Maybe that will help him feel like he’s gotten somewhere, or at least recharge him. “A part of me is excited about what’s out there, what else there is,” he says. “But there’s also the dread that there isn’t anything.”

Sitting in the back of a dark, noisy London coffeehouse, Isaac smiles a little, and finally comes up with his definition of success. “If the day ends,” he says, “and I haven’t fucked something up, then I feel OK.”

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Ronnie Spector

On her childhood hero, getting sober, life with Phil Spector, and dating John Lennon

You grew up in Spanish Harlem. What's the most New York thing about you?

I loved watching the black and Puerto Rican girls with their cigarettes and their high hair. We had a Jewish deli and a Chinese laundry. My father was white, and my mother was black and Indian. I thought it was great that everybody was dark – or not so dark.

Who was your biggest hero?

Frankie Lymon. When I heard "Why Do Fools Fall in Love," I loved his voice so much that I wanted to touch it. I grew up 15 blocks from him, and I didn't know anybody with that kind of diction. But he had bad people around him. Before he died, he would run up to cars on 42nd Street and beg for money – my idol, begging for pennies! That story hurt my guts, but at least he made me not want to do drugs.

What kind of books do you like to read?

All women's books, about Dolly Parton, Josephine Baker, Billie Holiday. The book Amy Winehouse's mother wrote about her. I've learned so much through those women. Each book I go through, I say, "That's what they did wrong." That's how I'm still living today.

What do you think of the new generation of pop stars, like Beyoncé and Taylor Swift?

I love that women have the power now. At my recording sessions in the 1960s, there was only one woman: Carol Kaye, on bass.

What new music moves you?

Amy Winehouse and Bruno Mars. "When I Was Your Man" is so great. I pull over in my car and listen to the whole song. His voice is like Frankie Lymon's.

How do you look back on the years with Phil Spector?

I had a big party at my wedding, and then I saw no one else after that. Our house was locked from the outside. I never went to a movie in seven years. I never went onstage for almost eight years. I could have five servants, but I couldn't have the stage, and that's the only thing I cared about.

Do you have any positive memories of Phil?

He was great in the studio. He could hear one mistake in one person's guitar and say, "Over there, in the corner – you hit a wrong note." That blew my mind. He was great as a producer. As a husband, not so much.

You had a drinking problem at one point.

How did you get sober?

Spector's new album, "English Heart," was released in April.

It started in the Sixties with my ex. Later, when I moved home to New York from L.A., all I thought about was getting my career back on track. I said, "That's it – no more drinking," and I haven't had a drink in maybe 33 years. My greatest accomplishment at this point is just being alive.

You became a mom later in life. How did that change you?

Things I couldn't do years ago, I do now, like cooking. I love going to ShopRite. I look a little nice in case someone says, "Can I take your picture?" I get a little bouffant going and put on a little lipstick. I try to look like Ronnie.

Your new album features remakes of British Invasion hits. What made you want to revisit these songs?

I was in the middle of that. The Ronettes hung out with the Beatles. The Rolling Stones were our opening act. The Kinks played shows with us.

You and your sister even double-dated John Lennon and George Harrison.

I was 18, and I didn't know John was married. John and George came and picked us up at the Strand Palace Hotel in London. They said to my mom, "Mrs. Bennett, would you like to go out with us to dinner?" I thought she would say, "Oh, you kids go out and have fun." But she said, "Let me get my purse!" George and John almost passed out. After dinner, my mom took the hint and got in a cab. The rest of us went to the Crazy Elephant club and John said, "Ronnie, sing a bit of 'Be My Baby' in my ear."

What's on your bucket list?

I've outgrown that. Now it's a "fuck it" list. I met someone from *Dancing With the Stars* and he said, "You should be on it." I want to, but not really. I love the show, but it looks like a lot of work.

When you and friends like Keith Richards get together, do you marvel that you're all still around?

We do. If someone had told me in the Sixties that I would be around 50 years later, still singing those songs, I would have said, "You're outta your mind."

Is it true Steve Van Zandt asked you out in the Seventies – and took you to see *The Exorcist*?

Yes! We were like buddies. It was fun! Little Anthony of the Imperials took me to see *The Ten Commandments*.

What's your advice about dating musicians?

Um...do it with caution? A lot of girls are hanging around every place they go.

Do you think about retiring?

The way people whistle at me? At this age? I love it. I will never retire from rock & roll. Rock & roll will have to retire me.

INTERVIEW BY DAVID BROWNE





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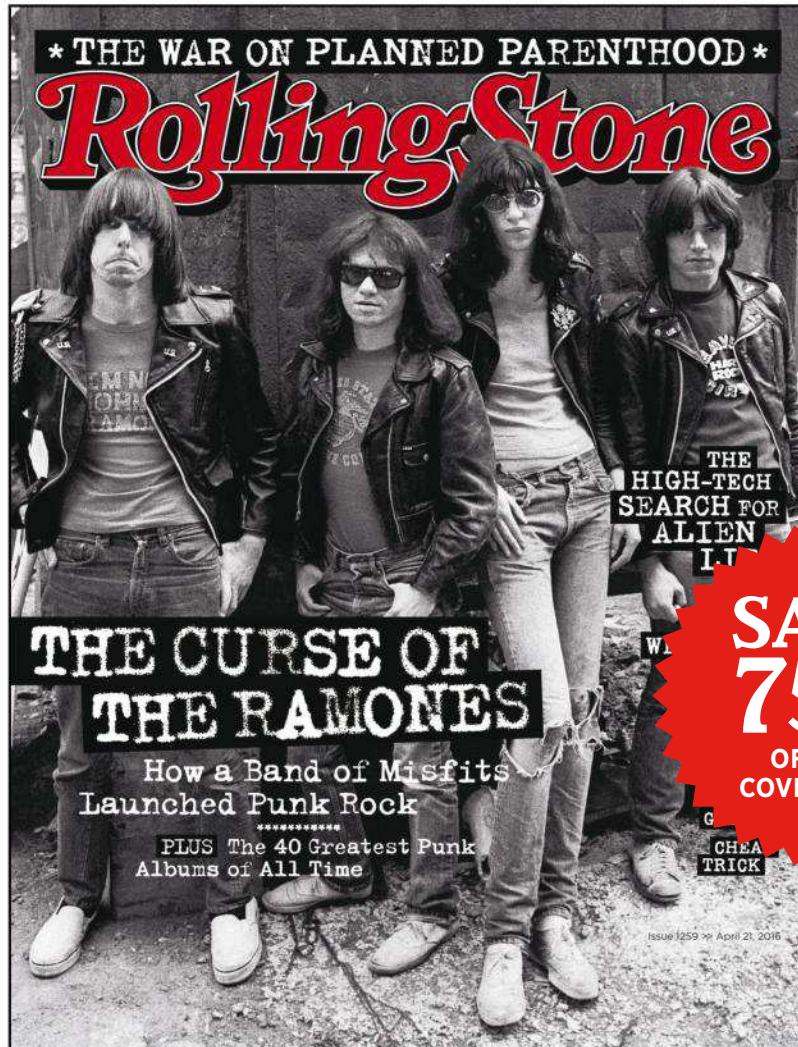
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